

SERMONS

PREACH'D

UPON

Several Occasions.

By JOHN Lord Archbishop
of *Canterbury*.

The Fourth Volume.

L O N D O N:

Printed for B. Aylmer at the *Three Pigeons* against
the *Royal-Exchange* in *Cornhill*; and W. Rogers
at the *Sun* against *St. Dunstan's Church* in
Fleetstreet. MDCXCIV.



His Grace
John Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury

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And five of them were wise, and five were foolish, &c. Page 3.

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The Parable of the ten Virgins.

I N A

S E R M O N

Preached before

Her R O Y A L H I G H N E S S

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Princess A N N of *Denmark*

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Tunbridge-Wells September 2d. 1688.

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James

1885

The Parable of the ten Virgins.

MATTH. XXV. 1, 2. &c.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish, &c.



Y design at present is to explain this *Parable*, and to make such *Observations* upon it as seem most naturally and without squeezing the *Parable* to spring from

it: And then to make some *Application* of it to our selves.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins; By the Kingdom of Heaven is meant the state and condition of things under the Gospel; By the ten Virgins, those who embraced the Profession of it, which is here represented by their taking their Lamps and go-

The Parable of

ing forth to meet the Bridegroom : in allusion to the ancient Custom of *Marriages*, in which the *Bridegroom* was wont to lead home his *Bride* in the Night by the light of *Lamps* or *Torches*.

But this Profession was not in all equally firm and fruitful ; and therefore those who persever'd and continued stedfast in this Profession, notwithstanding all the temptations and allurements of the World , and all the fierce storms and assaults of persecution to which this Profession was exposed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the fruits of the Spirit and abound in the Graces and Virtues of a good life, These are the *wise Virgins* : But those who either deserted this Profession, or did not bring forth fruits answerable to it, are the *foolish Virgins*.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we consider how the *Parable* represents them, *vers. 3, 4. They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oyl with them : But the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their Lamps.* So that they both took their *Lamps*, and both lighted them, and therefore must both be suppos'd to have some *oyl* in their *Lamps* at first, as appears from *verse 8.* where the *foolish Virgins*

Virgins said unto the wise, give us of your oyl, for our Lamps are gone out. They had it seems some Oyl in their Lamps at first, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future supply. And therefore the difference between the *wise* and *foolish* Virgins did not, as some have imagin'd, consist in this, that the *wise* Virgins had Oyl, but the *foolish* had none; but in this, that the *foolish* had taken no care for a further supply, after the Oyl which was at first put into their Lamps was spent; as the *wise* had done, who besides the Oyl that was in their Lamps carried likewise a *Reserve* in some other *Vessel*, for a continual supply of the *Lamp*, as there should be occasion; *the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their Lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, That they who are represented by the *wise Virgins* had not only embraced the Profession of the *Christian Religion*, as the *foolish Virgins* also had done, for they both had their Lamps lighted; but they likewise persever'd in that Profession, and brought forth fruits answerable to it. For by *Oyl* in their *Lamps* and the first lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that solemn Pro-

feſſion of *Faith* and *Repentance* which all *Chriſtians* make in *Baptiſm*: By that farther ſupply of *Oyl*, which the *wiſe Virgins* only took care to provide, is ſignified our conſtancy and perſeverance in this Profeſſion, together with the fruits of the Spirit, and the improvement of the *Grace* received in *Baptiſm* by the practice and exerciſe of all the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life whereby men are fitted and prepar'd for *Death* and *Judgment*, which are here repreſented to us by the coming of the *Bridegroom*.

This being plainly the main ſcope and intention of the *Parable*, I ſhall explain the reſt of it, as there ſhall be occaſion, under the ſeveral *Obſervations* which I ſhall raiſe from the ſeveral parts of it, And they ſhall be theſe.

First, I obſerve the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this as well as in the reſt of his *Parables*; as if He would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that among thoſe who enjoy the *Gospel* and make profeſſion of it, the number of them that are truly good is equal to thoſe that are bad. For our *B. Saviour* here repreſents the whole number of the *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* by *ten Virgins*, the half whereof the *Parable* ſeems to ſuppoſe

pose to be truly and really good, and to persevere in goodness to the end, *vers.* 1, 2. *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

Secondly, I observe how very common it is for men to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a due preparation for another World; and how willing men are to deceive themselves herein, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the description of the *foolish Virgins*, who had provided no supply of Oyl in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furnish'd themselves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *vers.* 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly, I observe, That even the better sort of Christians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for Death and Judgment: *Whilst the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*; even the *wise Virgins* as well as the *foolish*.

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Fourthly, I observe further, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. Thus the *foolish Virgins* did, and what a sad confusion and hurry they were in we may see *vers. 6, 7, 8, 9.* And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. At midnight; the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other: Then all those *Virgins* arose, and trimmed their Lamps: and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out: But the wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves. And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, *verse 10, 11, 12;* And whilst they went to buy the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other *Virgins*, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works of Super-erogation*; That no man can do more than needs, and is his duty to do, by way of preparati-
on

on for another World. For when the foolish Virgins would have begg'd of the wise some Oyl for their Lamps, the wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you. It was only the foolish Virgins that had entertain'd this foolish conceit, that there might be an over-plus of Grace and Merit in others sufficient to supply their want: But the wise knew not of any that they had to spare, but suppos'd all that they had little enough to qualify them for the reward of eternal life; Not so, say they, μήποτε, lest at any time, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should prove little enough for our selves.

Sixthly and lastly, I observe, That if we could suppose any persons to be so over-good, as to have more grace and goodness than needs to qualify them for the reward of eternal life, yet there is no assigning and transferring of this over-plus of Grace and Virtue from one man to another. For we see, verse 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of borrowing, or buying Oyl of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable,
that

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that one Sinner should be in a condition to merit for another.

All these *Observations* seem to have some fair and probable foundation in some part or other of this *Parable*; and most of them, I am sure, are agreeable to the main scope and intention of the whole. I shall speak to them severally, and as briefly as I can.

- I. *First*, I observe the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his *Parables*; as if he would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the *Gospel* and make *Profession* of it, the number of those who make a firm and sincere Profession of it, and persevere in goodness to the end, is equal to the number of those who do not make good their Profession, or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take notice, that our *B. Saviour* in this *Parable* represents the whole number of the *Professors* of *Christianity* by *ten Virgins*, the half of which the *Parable* seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the *Christian Profession*,
and

and to have persever'd therein to the last ;
*The Kingdom of heaven shall be likened un-
 to ten Virgin, which took their Lamps and
 went forth to meet the Bridegroom : And
 five of them were wise , and five were foo-
 lish.*

And this *Decorum* our B. Saviour
 seems carefully to observe in his other
Parables : As in the *Parable* of the *Pro-
 digal*, *Luke 15.* where for *one* Son that
 left his Father, and took riotous courses,
 there was *another* that stayed always with
 him and continued constant to his duty.
 And in the *Parable* of the *ten Talents*,
 which immediately follows that of the
ten Virgins, *two* are supposed to improve
 the Talents committed to them, for *one*
 that made no improvement of his. He
 that had *five Talents* committed to him
 made them *five more*, and he that had
two gained *other two* ; and only he that
 had but *one Talent*, *hid it in the earth*,
 and made no improvement of it. And
 in the *Parable* which I am now upon,
 the number of the *Professors* of *Christia-
 nity*, who took care to fit and prepare
 themselves for the *coming of the Bride-
 groom*, is supposed equal to the number
 of those who did not.

And

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And whether this be particularly intended in the *Parable* or not, it may however be thus far instructive to us; That we should be so far from lessening the number of *true Christians*, and from confining the *Church of Christ* within a narrow compass, so as to exclude out of its *Communion* the far greatest part of the *Professors of Christianity*; that on the contrary, we should enlarge the *Kingdom of Christ* as much as we can, and extend our charity to all *Churches and Christians*, of what *Denomination* soever, as far as regard to Truth and to the foundations of the *Christian Religion* will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side.

And for this reason perhaps it is, that our *B. Saviour* thought fit to frame his *Parables* with so remarkable a *Byass* to the charitable side: Partly to instruct us, to extend our charity towards all *Christian Churches*, and *Professors of the Christian Religion*, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with reason we can: And partly to reprove the uncharitableness of the *Jews*, who positively

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ly excluded all the rest of Mankind, besides themselves, from all hopes of Salvation. An odious temper, which to the infinite Scandal of the *Christian* Name and Profession, hath prevail'd upon some *Christians* to that notorious degree, as not only to shut out all the *Reform'd* Part of the *Western* Church, almost equal in number to themselves, from all hopes of Salvation under the notion of *Hereticks*; but likewise to un-church all the other Churches of the *Christian* World, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own subjection to the *Bishop* of *Rome*: And this they do, by declaring it to be of necessity to Salvation for every Creature to be subject to the *Roman Bishop*. And this Supremacy of the *Bishop* of *Rome* over all *Christian* Churches *Bellarmin* calls the *Sum of the Christian Religion*. So that the *Roman* Communion is plainly founded in *Schism*, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable Principle that can be, namely, that they are the only true Church of *Christ*, out of which none can be saved: which was the very *Schism* of the *Donatists*. And in this they are so positive, that the Learned men of that Church, in their Disputes and Writings,

tings, are much more inclinable to believe the Salvation of *Heathens* to be possible, than of any of those *Christians* whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*. The *Faith* of the Church of *Rome* is certainly none of the best; but of one of the greatest and most essential Vertues of the *Christian Religion*, I mean *Charity*, I doubt they have the least share of any *Christian Church* this day in the World.

- II. Secondly, I observe, not from any particular *circumstance*, but from the main *Scope* and design of this *Parable*, How very apt a great part of *Christians* are to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz*, a careful and due preparation for another World; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take the pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the description of the *foolish Virgins*, who had provided no *supply* of *Oyl* in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was *coming* would have furnish'd themselves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *vers. 8, 9, 10.* They contented themselves

selves with having their *Lamps* lighted at their first setting out to meet the *Bridegroom*, that is, with their being admitted into the *Profession* of *Christianity* by *Baptism*, but either were not stedfast in this *Profession*, or were not careful to adorn it with the *Graces* and *Vertues* of a good life.

And the true Reason why men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and are so hardly brought to those things wherein Religion mainly consists, I mean the fruits of the Spirit and the practice of real Goodness; I say, the true reason of this is, because they are extremely desirous to reconcile, if it were possible, the hopes of eternal happiness in another World with a liberty to live as they list in this present World: They are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their lusts, and governing their passions, and bridling their tongues, and practising all those duties which are comprehended in those two great *Commandments* of the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: They would fain gain the favour of God, and make their calling and election sure, by some easier way than by *giving all diligence* to add to their *Faith* and *Knowledge* the *Graces* and *Vertues* of a good life.

For

For the plain truth of the matter is, men had rather that Religion should be any thing than what indeed it is, *viz*, the thwarting and crossing of their vicious inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of their unruly appetites and passions, the sincere endeavour and the constant practice of all holiness and virtue in their lives: And therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomely palliate and excuse their evil inclinations and practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked lives, they would be contented to make an *honourable amends* and compensation to Almighty God in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of Mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and design of Religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it which, as they think, may serve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much devotion and respect towards God, and really costing them more money and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon them-

themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better, by some other way than that which he hath prescribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this *false Principle*, Religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among *Jews* and *Christians*, into external and little observances, and into a great zeal for lesser things with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of Religion; and, in a word, into infinite *Superstitions* of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary righteousness and merit of these things: In which some have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a strict bargain with God for eternal life and happiness; and have treated Him in so insolent a manner, by their Doctrine of the *Merit* of their *Devotions* and *good Works*, as if God were as much beholden to them for their service and obedience, as they are to Him for the reward of them; which they are not afraid to say they may challenge at God's hands as of right and justice belonging to them.

Nay, so far have they carried this *Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, as not
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only to pretend to merit eternal life for themselves, but likewise to do a great deal more for the benefit and advantage of others who have not righteousness and goodness enough of their own: Which was the silly conceit of the *foolish Virgins* here in the *Parable*, as I shall have occasion to shew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that such easy ways of Religion and pleasing God are very grateful to the corrupt nature of Man, and that men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil course are glad to be of a Church which will assure Salvation to men upon such terms: The great difficulty is, for men to believe that things which are so apparently absurd and unreasonable can be true; and to persuade themselves that they can impose upon God by such pretences of service and obedience, as no wise *Prince* or *Father* upon earth is to be deluded withal by his *Subjects* or *Children*. We ought to have worthier thoughts of God, and to consider that He is a *great King*, and will be obey'd and observ'd by his creatures *in his own way* and make them happy upon his own terms: and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him than any other sacrifice

fice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands: and likewise, that he is infinitely wise and good; and therefore that the *Laws*, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our happiness, than any *inventions* and *devices* of our own.

Thirdly, I observe that even the better and more considerate sort of *Christians* are not so careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for *Death* and *Judgment*; whilst the *Bridegroom* tarried, they all slumbered and slept. Even the *Disciples* of our *Saviour*, whilst he was yet personally present with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own mouth, *Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation*; yet did not keep that guard upon themselves as to *watch with him for one hour*. In many things, says *St. James*, we offend all; even the best of us: And who is there that doth not, some time or other, remit of his vigilancy and care, so as to give the Devil an advantage and to lye open to temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himself? But then the difference between the *wise* and *foolish Virgins* was this, that tho they both

III.

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slept, yet the *wise* did not let their *Lamps* go out; they neither quitted their *Profession*, nor did they extinguish it by a bad life: and tho when the *Bridegroom* came suddenly upon them, they were not so actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good disposition of their minds and the general course of a holy life: Their *Lamps* might *burn dim* for want of continual trimming, but they had *Oyl* in their *Vessels* to supply their *Lamps*, which the *foolish Virgins* had taken no care to provide. But surely the greatest wisdom of all is to maintain a continual watchfulness, that so we may not be surpriz'd by the *coming of the Bridegroom*, and be in a confusion when *Death* or *Judgment* shall overtake us. And *blessed are those Servants*, and *wise* indeed, whose *Lamps* always *burn bright*, and whom the *Bridegroom* when *he comes* shall find *watching* and in a fit posture and preparation to meet Him.

- IV. *Fourthly*, I observe likewise, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. And thus the *foolish Virgins* did,
but

but what a sad confusion and hurry they were in at the sudden coming of the *Bridegroom*, when they were not only *asleep*, but when after they were awaken'd they found themselves altogether unprovided of that which was necessary to trim their *Lamps* and to put them in a posture to meet the *Bridegroom*: When they wanted that which was necessary at that very instant, but could not be provided in an instant: I say, what a tumult and confusion they were in, being thus surpriz'd, the *Parable* represents to us at large, *vers. 6, 7, 8, 9. and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps*, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the *foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.*

At midnight there was a cry made, that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other; when they were fast asleep, and suddenly awaken'd in great terror, when they could not on the sudden recollect themselves, and consider what to do; when the summons was so very short, that they had neither time to consider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

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And such is the Case of those who put off their *Repentance* and *Preparation* for another World, till they are surpriz'd by *Death* or *Judgment*; for it comes all to one in the issue, which of them it be. The *Parable* indeed seems more particularly to point at our *Lord's coming to Judgment*, but the case is much the same as to those who are surpriz'd by *sudden Death*; such as gives them but little, or not sufficient time for so great a work: because such as *Death* leaves them, *Judgment* will certainly find them.

And what a miserable confusion must they needs be in, who are thus surpriz'd either by the one or the other? How unfit should we be, if the *general Judgment* of the World should come upon us on the sudden, to meet that *great Judge* at his *coming*, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What shall we then be able to do, in that great and universal consternation, when the *Son of man shall appear in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory*; when the *Sun shall be darken'd, and the Moon turned into blood, and all the powers of Heaven shall be shaken*: when all *Nature* shall feel such violent pangs and convulsions, and the whole World shall be
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in a combustion flaming and cracking about our ears : When *the Heavens shall be shrivel'd up as a Scroll when it is roll'd together* , and the *Earth* shall be tofs'd from its Center, and every Mountain and Island shall be removed? What thoughts can the wisest men then have about them, in the midst of so much noise and terror? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? when they shall see the *Angel*, that standeth upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifting up his hand to Heaven and swearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever that Time shall be no longer ; as this dreadful Day is described *Rev. 10. 5, 6. and chap. 6. 15.* where Sinners are represented at the *Appearance* of this Great Judge, not as flying to God in hopes of mercy, but as flying from Him in utter despair of finding mercy with Him : *The Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the Mighty Men, and the Rich Men, and the Great Captains hid themselves in the Dens and in the Rocks of the Earth ; and said to the Mountains and Rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : For the Great Day of his wrath is come, and who shall be*

able to stand? The biggest and the boldest Sinners that ever were upon Earth, shall then flee from the face of Him whom they have so often blasphemed and denied; and shall so far despair of finding mercy with Him in that Day, who would sue to Him for it no sooner, that they shall address themselves to the *Mountains and Rocks*, as being more pitiful and exorable than *He*; *to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: From the wrath of the Lamb*, to signify to us that nothing is more terrible than *Meekness and Patience* when they are thoroughly provok'd and turn'd into *Fury*.

In such dreadful confusion shall all impenitent Sinners be, when they shall be surpriz'd by that *Great and terrible Day of the Lord*: And the *Case of a dying Sinner*, who would take no care in the time of his Life and Health to make preparation for another World, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying man can do in such a strait of time? in the midst of so much pain and weakness of Body, and of such confusion and amazement of Mind. With what heart

heart can he set about so great a Work, for which there is so little time? With what face can he apply himself to God in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his Life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his cries and regard his tears that are forc'd from him in this day of his necessity? when he is conscious to himself that in that *long day of God's Grace and Patience* he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invitations, and *rejected the counsel of God against himself*. In a word, how can he who *would not know, in that his Day, the things which belonged to his peace*, expect any other but that they should now be for ever *hid from his eyes*, which are ready to be clos'd in utter darkness?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a *death-bed Repentance*: But I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one *Example*, that I know of, in the whole *Bible* of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean that of the *penitent Thief upon the Cross*: And the circumstances of his Case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that
it

it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary Cases. We are not like to suffer in the company of the *Son of God* and of the *Saviour of the World*; and if we could do so, it is not certain that we should behave our selves towards Him so well as the *penitent Thief* did, and make so very good an end of so very bad a Life.

And the *Parable* in the *Text* is so far from giving any encouragement to a *Death bed Repentance* and *Preparation*, that it rather represents their Case as desperate who put off their *Preparation* to that Time. How ineffectual all that the *foolish Virgins* could do at that time did in the conclusion prove, is set forth
V. 8, 9, 10, to us at large in the *Parable*; They
11, 12. wanted *Oyl*, but could neither *borrow* nor *buy* it: They would *then* fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by *entreaty*, nor for money: First they apply themselves to the *wise Virgins*, for a share in the *over-plus* of their *Graces* and *Virtues*; the *foolish* said unto the *wise*,
V. 8. give us of your *Oyl* for our *Lamps* are gone out; but the *wise* answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: The *wise Virgins*, it seems knew of none they

they had to spare: And then they are represented as *ironically* sending the *foolish Virgins* to some *famous Market* where this *Oyl* was pretended to be *sold*; go ye rather to them that sell and buy for your V. 9. selves: And as dying and desperate persons are apt to catch at every twig, and when they can see no hopes of being saved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; so these foolish Virgins follow the advice; and whilst they V. 10. went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; and afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.

You see how *little*, or rather *no* encouragement at all there is from any the least circumstance in this *Parable*, for those who have delay'd their *Preparation* for another World till they be overtaken by *Death* or *Judgment*, to hope by any thing that they can then do, by any importunity which they can then use, to gain admission into Heaven. Let those consider this with fear and trembling, who forget God and neglect Religion all their Life-time, and yet feed themselves

selves with vain hopes by some *Device* or other to be admitted into Heaven at last.

- V. *Fifthly*, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, that is, that no man can do more than needs, and than is his duty to do, by way of *Preparation* for another World.
- V. 8. For when the *foolish Virgins* would have begg'd of the *wise* some *Oyl* for their *Lamps*, the *wise* answered, *not so; lest there be not enough for us and you:*
- V. 9. It was only the *foolish Virgins* that in the time of their extremity, and when they were conscious that they wanted that which was absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into Heaven, who had entertain'd this *idle Conceit* that there might be an *overplus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others sufficient to supply their want: But the *wise* knew not of any they had to spare, but supposed all that they had done, or could possibly do, to be little enough to qualify them for the glorious Reward of eternal Life: *Not so*, say they, *μήποτε* *lest at any time*, that is, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should be
- be

be little enough for our selves: And in this *Point* they had been plainly instructed by the *Bridegroom* himself, *But ye, when ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants, and have done nothing but what was our duty to do.*

And yet this *Conceit* of the foolish *Virgins*, as absurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earnest by a grave *Matron*, who gives out her self to be the *Mother and Mistress of all Churches*, and the only infallible *Oracle of Truth*, I mean the *Church of Rome*, whose avowed *Doctrine* it is, that there are some Persons so excellently good that they may do more than needs for their own *Salvation*: And therefore when they have done as much for themselves as in strict duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable consideration for Heaven, and as much as in equal justice between God and Man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their *Friends*, and begin a *new Score*; and from that time forwards may put the *Surplusage* of their good *Works* as a *Debt* upon God, to be laid up in the *Publick Treasury* of the *Church*, as so many *Bills of Credit* which the *Pope* by his *Pardons* and

The Parable of

and *Indulgences* may dispense, and place to whose account he pleases: And out of this *Bank*, which is kept at *Rome*, those who never took care to have any *Righteousness* of their own may be supplied at reasonable rates.

To which they have added a further supply of *Grace*, if there should be any need of it, by the *Sacrament* of *extreme Unction*, never heard of in the *Christian Church* for many Ages; but devised, as it were on purpose, to furnish such *foolish Virgins* with *Oyl* as are here described in the *Parable*.

And thus by one *Device* or other they have enervated the *Christian Religion* to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: And, instead of the real fruits of *Goodness* and *Righteousness*, it produceth little else but *Superstition* and *Folly*; or if it produce any *real Virtues*, yet even the virtue of those *Virtues* is in a great measure spoil'd by their arrogant pretences of *Merit* and *Super-erogation*, and is render'd insignificant to themselves by their insolent carriage and behaviour towards God.

Sixthly and *lastly*, if we could suppose any Persons to be so overgrown with Goodness, as to have more than needs to qualify them for the Reward of eternal Life; yet there can be no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *overplus* of Grace and *Virtue* from one man to another. For we see that all the ways that could be thought on of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying* Oyl of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner who owes all that he hath, and much more to God, should have any thing to spare wherewithal to *merit* for another.

Indeed our *B. Saviour* hath *merited* for us all the *Reward of eternal Life*, upon the *Conditions* of *Faith* and *Repentance* and *Obedience*: But the infinite *Merit* of his *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we our selves be not really and inherently righteous. So *St. John* tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary *Conceit*, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.*

If we do sincerely endeavour to please God and to keep his commandments in
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the general course of a holy and virtuous Life, the *Merit of Christ's perfect Obedience and Sufferings* will be available with God for the acceptance of our *sincere* though but *imperfect Obedience*. But if we take no care to be *righteous* and good our selves, the *perfect righteousness* of *Christ* will do us no good; much less the *imperfect righteousness* of any other man who is a Sinner himself. And the holiest man that ever was upon Earth can no more *assign* and make over his *Righteousness*, or *Repentance*, or any part of either, to another that wants it, than a man can *bequeath* his *Wisdom*, or *Learning* to his *Heir*, or his *Friend*: No more than a *sick man* can be restored to *Health* by virtue of the *Physick* which another man hath taken.

Let no man therefore think of being good by a *Deputy*, that cannot be contented to be happy and to be saved the same way, that is, to go to *Hell* and to be tormented there in *Person*, and to go to *Heaven* and be admitted into that *Place of Bliss* only by *Proxy*. So that these *good Works* with a *hard name*, and the making over the *Merit* of them to others, have no manner of foundation
either

either in *Scripture* or *Reason*, but are all mere *Fancy* and *Fiction* in *Divinity*.

The *Inference* from all this shall be the *application* which our *Saviour* makes of this *Parable*, *Watch therefore, for ye know* V. 13. *neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh*; as if he had said, the design of this *Parable* is to instruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard and in a constant readiness and preparation *to meet the Bridegroom*; because we know not the time of his coming to *Judgment*, nor yet, which will be of the same consequence and concernment to us, do any of us know the precise time of our own *Death*. Either of these may happen at any time, and come when we least expect them. And therefore we should make the best and speediest provision that we can for another World, and should be continually upon our watch and trimming our Lamps, that we may not be surprized by either of these; neither by our own *particular Death*, nor by the *general Judgment* of the World: *Because the Son of man will come in a Day when we look not for Him, and at an hour when we are not aware.*

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More

More particularly, we should take up a present and effectual resolution not to delay our *Repentance* and the reformation of our Lives, that we may not have that great Work to do when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to dispose of our *temporal* Concernments, much less to prepare for *Eternity*, and to do that in a few moments which ought to have been the care and endeavour of our whole Lives: That we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant *Repentance*; and to do that in great haste and confusion, which certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate thoughts, and all the consideration in the world.

And we should provide store of *Oil* in our *Vessels*, wherewith to supply our *Lamps* that they may burn bright to the last; I mean, we should improve the *Grace* which we received in *Baptism*, by abounding in the fruits of the Spirit and in all the substantial Virtues of a good Life; that so *an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

By this means, when we are called to meet the Bridegroom, we shall not be put

put to those miserable and sharking shifts which the *foolish Virgins* were driven to, of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl*; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: And though the Dying man may make a hard shift to support himself with these false Comforts for a little while, yet when the short Delusion is over, which will be as soon as ever he is stepp'd into the other World, he will to his everlasting confusion and trouble find the door of Heaven shut against him, and that notwithstanding all his *vast Treasure of Pardons and Indulgences*, which have cost him so much and are worth so little, he *shall never see the Kingdom of God*.

And *lastly*, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our *Lamps* by *quitting* the *Profession* of our *Holy Religion* upon any temptation of advantage, or for fear of any loss or suffering whatsoever. This *Occasion* will call for all our *Faith* and *Patience*, all our *Courage* and *Constancy*,

*Nunc animis opus, Aenea, nunc pectore
firmo.*

When it comes to this *Trial*, we had

need to *gird up the loins of our minds*, to summon all our forces, and to *put on the whole armour of God*, that we may be able to *stand fast in an evil day*, and when we have done all to stand.

1 Pet. 5.
12.

And now, my Brethren, to use the words of St. Peter, I testify unto you, that this is the true Grace of God wherein ye stand. The Protestant Reformed Religion, which we in this Nation profess, is the very Gospel of Christ, the true ancient Christianity.

And, for God's sake, since in this hour of Temptation, when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testify our love to it in the same way that our Saviour would have us shew our love to Him, by keeping his commandments.

Philip. 1.
27.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's Exhortation, so very proper for this purpose, and to this present Time, *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead lives suitable to the Christian Religion: And then, as it follows, *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the*

the Gospel: And in nothing terrified by your Adversaries, which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.

Now unto Him that is able to stablish you in the Gospel, and to keep you from falling; and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory with exceeding joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever. Amen.

A
Thanksgiving-Sermon
F O R

Our Deliverance by the P. of Orange.

Preached at *Lincolns-Inn-Chappel*,
January 31. 1688.

To the Worshipful the
 Masters of the BENCH,
 And the rest of the
 GENTLEMEN
 Of the
 Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn.*

T*Hough I was at first very unwilling to Expose to the Publick a Sermon made upon so little Warning, and so great an Occasion ; yet upon second thoughts I could not think it fit to resist the Unanimous and Earnest Request of so many Worthy Persons, as the Masters of the Bench of this Honourable Society ; to whom I stand so much indebted for your great and continued*

tinued respects to me, and kind acceptance of my Labours among you for now above the space of Five and Twenty Years. In a most grateful acknowledgment whereof, this Discourse, such as it is, in mere Obedience to your Commands, is now humbly presented to you, by

Your most Obliged and

Feb. 28.
1688^g₉.

Faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

A

Thanksgiving-Sermon

FOR

Our Deliverance by the P. of Orange.

E Z R A ix. . 13, 14.

*And after all that is come upon us for our
evil deeds, and for our great trespass;
seeing that thou our God hast punished
us less than our Iniquities deserve, and
hast given us such a deliverance as this :*

*Should we again break thy Commandments,
and join in affinity with the people of
these Abominations ; wouldst not thou be
angry with us till thou hadst consumed us,
so that there should be no remnant nor
escaping ?*

I Am sufficiently aware that the parti-
cular occasion of these Words is, in
several respects very different from the
Occasion of this Day's Solemnity. For
these

these Words were spoken by *Ezra* at a time appointed for Publick and Solemn Humiliation. But I shall not now consider them in that relation, but rather as they refer to that Great *Deliverance* which God had so lately wrought for them; and as they are a Caution to take heed of abusing great mercies received from God; and so they are very proper and pertinent to the great Occasion of this Day. Nay these Words, even in their saddest aspect, are not so unsuitable to it. For we find in *Scripture* upon the most solemn Occasions of Humiliation, that good Men have always testified a thankful sense of the goodness of God to them. And indeed, the Mercy of God doth then appear above measure merciful, when the Sinner is most deeply sensible of his own Vileness and Unworthiness. And so *Ezra* here, in the depth of their sorrow and Humiliation, hath so great a sense of the greatness of their Deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it; *And hast given us such a Deliverance as this.* And on the other hand, we find that good Men, in their most solemn Praises and Thanksgivings, have made very serious reflections upon their own unworthiness. And surely the best way

way to make Men truly thankful is first to make them very humble. When *David* makes his most solemn acknowledgments to God for his great Mercies to him; how doth he abase himself before Him; *But who am I, and what is my people?* And so likewise, after he had summoned all the powers and faculties of his Soul to join in the praises of God, he interposeth this seasonable meditation, *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* The greater and more lively sense we have of the goodness of God to us, the more we shall abhor our selves in dust and ashes; nothing being more apt to melt us into tears of Repentance, than the consideration of great and undeserved Mercies vouchsafed to us. *The goodness of God doth naturally lead to repentance.*

1 Chron.

29. 4.

Psal. 103.

10.

Having thus reconciled the *Text* to the present *Occasion*, I shall for the more distinct handling of the *Words* take notice of these two Parts in them.

First, Here is a Case supposed; should we, after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and since God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as this; should we again break his Commandments.

Second-

Secondly, Here is a sentence and determination in the Case ; *Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consum'd us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping ?* This is not spoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of question ; but is the more vehemently positive, the more peremptorily affirmative ; as if he had said, it cannot otherwise be in reason expected , but that after such repeated provocations God *should be angry with us till he had consumed us.*

I. *First*, Here is a Case supposed ; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass ; and since God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as this : Should we again break his commandments, and join in affinity with the People of these abominations.* In which Words these following Propositions seem to be involv'd, which I shall but just mention, and pass to the Second Part of the Text.

1. That Sin is the cause of all our sufferings, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass.* Our evil deeds bring all other evils upon us.

2. That

2. That great Sins have usually a proportionable punishment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatness of our punishment; *for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasss*, there is the greatness of our Sin. But when I say that great sins have a proportionable Punishment, I do not mean that any temporal Punishments are proportionable to the great evil of Sin; but that God doth usually observe a proportion in the temporal punishments of Sin, so that although no temporal punishment be proportionable to Sin, yet the temporal punishment of one Sin holds a proportion to the punishment of another; and consequently, lesser and greater Sins have proportionably a lesser and greater Punishment.

3. That all the Punishments which God inflicts in this Life do fall short of the demerit of our Sins; *and seeing thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve*. In the Hebrew it is, *and hast kept down our iniquities*, that is, that they should not rise up against us. The LXX. expresseth it very emphatically, *thou hast eased us of our sins*, that is, thou hast not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the restraints
which

which God puts upon his anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the Sinner would not be able to bear it, but must sink under it. Indeed it is only said in the *Text*, that the punishment which God inflicted upon the *Jews*, though it was a long Captivity, was beneath the desert of their Sins: But yet it is universally true, and *Ezra* perhaps might intend to insinuate so much, that all temporal Punishments, though never so severe, are always less than our iniquities deserve.

4. That God many times works very great Deliverances for those who are very unworthy of them; *and hast given us such a Deliverance as this*, notwithstanding our evil deeds, and notwithstanding our great *Trespass*.

5. That we are but too apt, even after great Judgments, and after great Mercies, to relapse into our former Sins; *should we again break thy Commandments*. *Ezra* insinuates that there was great reason to fear this, especially considering the strange temper of that People, who when God multiply'd his blessings upon them, were so apt to *wax fat and kick against Him*; and tho he had cast them several times into the furnace of Affliction, though they were melted for the present

sent, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That it is good to take notice of those particular Sins which have brought the Judgments of God upon us. So Ezra does here; *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; and, should we again join in affinity with the People of these abominations.*

Secondly, Here is a Sentence and determination in the Case; *wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* Which Question, as I said before, doth imply a strong and peremptory affirmative; as if he had said, after such a provocation there is great reason to conclude that God would be angry with us till he had consumed us.

II.

From whence the *Observation* contained in this part of the *Text* will be this, *That it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, and a sad presage of ruin to a People, after great Judgments and great Deliverances, to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again.* Hear how passionately Ezra expresses himself in this Case, *verse 6. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God. Why? what*
E
was

was the cause of this great shame and confusion of face? He tells us, *verse 9.* *for we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to set up the House of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a Wall in Judah and in Jerusalem; that is, to restore to them the free and safe exercise of their Religion. Here was great Mercy, and a mighty Deliverance indeed; and yet after this they presently relapsed into a very great sin, verse 10. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy Commandments.*

In the handling of this *Observation*,
I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew that this is a very heavy aggravation of Sin, and

Secondly, That it is a fatal preface of ruin to a People.

First, It is a heavy aggravation of Sin after great Judgments, and after signal Mercies and Deliverances to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again.
Here

Deliverance by the P. of Orange. 51

Here are *three* things to be distinctly spoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of Sin to return to it after great Judgments.
2. To do this after great Mercies and Deliverances.
3. After both to return to the same Sins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of Sin after great Judgments have been upon us to return to an evil course. Because this is an Argument of great obstinacy in evil. The longer *Pharaoh* resisted the Judgments of God, the more was his wicked heart hardened, till at last he arriv'd at a monstrous degree of hardness, having been, as the *Text* tells us, hardened under *ten plagues*. And we find, that after God had threaten'd the People of *Israel* with several Judgments, he tells them, that if they *will not be reformed by* Lev. 26. *all these things, he will punish them seven* 13. *times more for their sins*. And if the just God will in such a case punish seven times more, we may conclude that the Sin is Seven times greater.

What sad complaints doth the *Prophet* make of the People of *Israel* growing
E 2 worse

- Isaiah 1. 4. worse for Judgments. *Ab! sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, children that have been corrupters, a seed of evil doers.* He can hardly find words enough to express how great Sinners they were; and he adds the reason in the next verse,
- Verse 5. *Why should they be smitten any more? they will revolt more and more.* They were but the worse for Judgments. This renders them *a sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity.* And again, *The People turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts; therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* And the same Prophet further complains to the same purpose,
- Isaiah 26. 11. *When thy hand is lifted up they will not see.* There is a particular brand set upon King *Ahaz*, because affliction made him worse: *This is that King Ahaz*, that is, *that grievous and notorious Sinner*: And what was it that rendr'd him so? *In the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord; this is that King Ahaz*, who is said to have provoked the Lord *above all the Kings of Israel which were before him.*
- 2 Chron. 28. 22. *that grievous and notorious Sinner*: And what was it that rendr'd him so? *In the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord; this is that King Ahaz*, who is said to have provoked the Lord *above all the Kings of Israel which were before him.*

2. It is likewise a sore aggravation of Sin, when it is committed after great Mercies and Deliverances vouchsafed to us. Because this is an argument of great ingra-

ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge upon the People of Israel, that *they remembered not the Lord* Judges 8. *their God, who had delivered them out of* 34, 35. *the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither shewed they kindness to the House of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon who had been their Deliverer, according to all the goodness which he had shewed to Israel.* God, we see, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the *Instruments* of our Deliverance; but much more, when we are unthankful to *Him* the *Author* of it. And how severely does *Nathan* the Prophet reproach *David* upon this account? *Thus said the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee King over Israel, and delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, &c. And if this had been too little, I would moreover have done such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despis'd the Commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?* God here reckons up his manifold mercies and deliverances, and aggravates *David's* Sin upon this account. And he was very angry likewise with *Solomon* for the same reason, *because he* 1 Kings *had turned from the Lord God of Israel,* 11. 9. *who had appear'd to him twice.* However we may slight the mercies of God, he

keeps a punctual and strict account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great blot upon *Hezekiah*, that *he returned not again according to the benefits done unto him*, God takes very severe notice of all the unkind and unworthy returns that are made to Him for his Goodness.

Ingratitude to God is so unnatural and monstrous, that we find Him appealing against us for it to the inanimate Creatures. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth! for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourish'd and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me.* And then he goes on and upbraids them with the Brute Creatures, as being more grateful to men than men are to God. *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass her Masters Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And in the same Prophet there is the like complaint, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.* They that will not acknowledge the Mercies of God's Providence shall feel the strokes of his Justice.

There

There is no greater evidence in the World of an intractable disposition, than not to be wrought upon by kindness, not to be melted by mercies, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle usage. Nay, God expects that his mercies should lay so great an obligation upon us, that even a Miracle should not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there* Deut 13.
arise among you a Prophet, says Moses to 1, 2.
the People of Israel, or a Dreamer of
dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder,
and the Sign or the Wonder cometh to pass,
whereof he spake to thee, saying, let us go
after other Gods and serve them; thou
shalt not hearken to the words of that Pro-
phet. And he gives the reason, because Verse 5.
he hath spoken to turn you away from the
Lord God of Israel, which brought you out
of the Land of Egypt, and delivered you
out of the House of Bondage.

3. It is a greater aggravation yet, after great Mercies and Judgments to return to the same Sins. Because this can hardly be without our sinning against knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the Sin is which we were guilty of, and have been so sorely punish'd for before. This is an argument of a very perverse and incorrigible tem-

per, and that which made the Sin of the People of *Israel* so above measure sinful, that after so many signal Deliverances, and so many terrible Judgments, they fell into the same Sin of *murmuring ten times*; *murmuring* against God the *Author*, and against *Moses* the glorious *Instrument* of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*; which was one of the *two* great *Types* of the *Old Testament*, both of *temporal* and *spiritual* Oppression and Tyranny. Hear with what resentment God speaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great Mercy and Deliverance. *Because all these men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the Wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkned unto my voice: surely they shall not see the Land which I swore to their Fathers.* And after he had brought them into the promised Land, and wrought great Deliverances for them several times, how does he upbraid them with their proneness to fall again into the same Sin of Idolatry? *And the Lord said unto the Children of Israel, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites; from the Children of Ammon, and from the Philistins? The Zidonians also and the Ama-*

Numb. 14

22.

23.

Judges 10.

11, 12, 13,

14.

15.

Amalekites and Maonites did oppress you ; and ye cryed unto me, and I delivered you out of their hand : yet you have forsaken me, and served other Gods ; wherefore I will deliver you no more : go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. This incensed God so highly against them, that they still relaps'd into the same Sin of Idolatry after so many afflictions and so many deliverances. Upon such an occasion well might the Prophet say, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee*, Jer. 2. 19. *and thy sins shall reprove thee : know therefore, that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.* It is hardly possible but we should know that the wickedness for which we have been so severely corrected is an evil and bitter thing.

Thus much for the *first part of the Observation*, namely, that it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, after great Judgments and great deliverances to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. I proceed to the

Second part, namely, That this is a fatal presage of ruin to a People ; *Should we again break thy Commandments, and join*
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in affinity with the People of these abominations, wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? And so God threatens the People of Israel in the Text which I cited before, wherefore I will de-

Judges 10.
13.

liver you no more. Wherefore; that is, because they would neither be reform'd by the Afflictions wherewith God had exercised them, nor by the many wonderful Deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And there is great reason why God should deal thus with a People that continues impenitent both under the Judgments and Mercies of God.

1. Because this doth ripen the Sins of a Nation; and it is time for God to put in his Sickle when a People are ripe for ruin. When the measure of their Sins is full, it is no wonder if the Cup of his indignation begin to overflow. It is said of the *Amorites*, four hundred years before God brought that fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extirpation of them, because *the iniquity of the Amorites, was not yet full*. When neither the Mercies nor the Judgments of God will bring us to repentance, we are then fit for destruction; according to that

Gen. 15.
16.

that of the *Apostle*, *What if God willing* Rom. 9.
to shew his wrath, and make his power 22.
known, endured with much long suffering
the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?
 They who are not wrought upon neither
 by the patience of God's Mercies, nor
 by the patience of his Judgments, seem
 to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and
 ready for destruction.

1. Because this incorrigible temper
 shews the Case of such persons to be
 desperate and incurable. *Why should* Isaiah 1. 5.
they be smitten any more? says God of
 the People of *Israel*, *they will revolt more*
and more. How often would I have gather- Matth. 23.
ed you, says our *B. Saviour* to the *Jews*, 37, 38.
even as a hen gathereth her chickens under
her wings? and ye would not. Behold, your
 house is left to you *desolate*, that is, ye
 shall be utterly destroyed; as it hapned
 forty years after to *Jerusalem*, and to the
 whole *Jewish Nation*.

When God sees that all the means
 which he can use do prove ineffectual
 and to no purpose, he will then give over
 a People, as Physicians do their Patients
 when they see that nature is spent and
 their case past remedy. When men will
 not be the better for the best means that
 Heaven can use, God will then leave
 them

them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their Sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to our selves, and to the solemn *Occasion* of this *Day*.

And if this be our *Case*, let us take heed that this be not also our *Doom* and *Sentence*.

First, The *Case* in the *Text* doth very much resemble *Ours*. And that in *three* respects. God hath sent great judgments upon us *for our evil deeds* and for our great *trespasses*: He hath *punish'd us less than our iniquities have deserv'd*: And hath *given* us a very great and wonderful *Deliverance*.

1. God hath inflicted *great Judgments* upon us *for our evil deeds, and for our great Trespasses*. *Great Judgments*, both for the *quality*, and for the *continuance* of them. It shall suffice only to mention those which are of a more *ancient Date*. Scarce hath any Nation been more calamitous than this of *Ours*, both in respect of the *Invasions* and *Conquests* of *Foreigners*, and of our own *Civil* and intestine *Divisions*. Four times we have been
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Conquer'd; By the *Romans*, *Saxons*, *Danes*, and *Normans* And our *intestine Divisions* have likewise been great and of long continuance. Witness the *Barons Wars*, and that long and cruel *Contest* between the *two Houses* of *York* and *Lancaster*.

But to come nearer to our *own Times*, What fearful Judgments and Calamities of *War*, and *Pestilence*, and *Fire*, have many of us seen? And how close did they follow one another? What terrible havock did the *Sword* make amongst us for many years? And this not the *Sword* of a *Forreign Enemy*, but of a *Civil War*; the mischiefs whereof were all terminated upon our selves, and have given deep wounds, and left broad scars upon the most considerable Families in the Nation.

— *Alta manent civilis vulnera dextra.*

This *War* was drawn out to a great length, and had a Tragical end, in the *Murther* of an excellent *King*; and in the *Banishment* of his *Children* into a strange Countrey, whereby they were exposed to the *Arts* and *Practices* of those of *another Religion*; the mischievous Consequences whereof we have ever since sadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at last to put an end to the miserable *Distractions* and Confusions of almost *twenty* years, by the happy *Restoration* of the *Royal Family*, and our *ancient Government* ; which seem'd to promise to us a lasting settlement, and all the felicities we could wish : yet how soon was this bright and glorious morning overcast, by the restless and black Designs of that sure and inveterate Enemy of ours, the Church of *Rome*, for the restoring of their Religion amongst us. And there was too much encouragement given to this Design, by those who had power in their hands, and had brought home with them a secret good will to it.

For this *great Trespass*, and for our many other Sins, God was angry with us, and sent among us the most raging *Pestilence* that ever was known in this Nation, which in the space of *eight* or *nine* Months swept away near a third part of the Inhabitants of this vast and populous *City*, and of the *Suburbs* thereof ; besides a great many *thousands* more in several parts of the Nation. *But we did not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.*

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And therefore, the very next year after, God sent a terrible and devouring *Fire*, which in less than *three* days time laid the greatest part of this great *City* in ashes. And there is too much reason to believe that *the Enemy* did this; *that* perpetual and implacable *Enemy* of the peace and happiness of this Nation.

And even since the time of that dreadful Calamity, which is now above *twenty* years ago, we have been in a continual fear of the cruel Designs of that Party, which had hitherto been incessantly working under ground, but now began to shew themselves more openly: and especially since a *Prince* of that Religion succeeded to the Crown, our eyes have been ready *to fail us for fear, and for looking after* those dreadful things that were coming upon us, and seem'd to be even at the door. A *fear* which this Nation could easily have rid it self of, because they that caused it were but a handful in comparison of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign force and assistance; had not the Principles of Humanity, and of our Religion too, restrain'd us from violence and cruelty, and from every thing which had the appearance of undutifulness to the
Government

Government which the Providence of God had set over us. An instance of the like patience under the like provocations, for so long a time, and after such visible and open attempts upon them, when they had the Laws so plainly on their side, I challenge any Nation or Church in the World, from the very foundation of it, to produce. Inasmuch, that if God had not put it into the hearts of our kind *Neighbours*, and of that incomparable *Prince*, who laid and conducted that great Design with so much skill and secrecy, to have appear'd so seasonably for our rescue, our Patience had infallibly, without a Miracle, been our ruine. And I am sure if our *Enemies* had ever had the like Opportunity in their hands, and had overbalanced us in numbers but half so much as we did them, they would never have let it slip; but would long since have extirpated us utterly, and have *made the remembrance of us to have ceas'd from among men.*

And now if you ask me, for what Sins more especially God hath sent all these Judgments upon us? It will not, I think, become us to be very particular and positive in such determinations. Thus much is certain, That we have all sinn'd and
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contributed to these Judgments; every one hath had some hand, more or less, in pulling down this vengeance upon the Nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious cause of God's Judgments as far as we can from our selves, and our own Party, and upon any slight pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to instance in *one* or *two* things which may probably enough have had a more particular and immediate hand in drawing down the Judgments of God upon us.

Our horrible contempt of Religion on the one hand, by our *Infidelity* and *Prophaneness*; and our shameful abuse of it on the other, by our gross *Hypocrisy*, and sheltering great wickedness and immoralities under the cloak and profession of Religion.

And then, great *Diffensions* and Divisions, great uncharitableness and bitterness of Spirit among those of the same Religion; so that almost from the beginning of our happy Reformation the *Enemy* had sown these *Tares*, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of *Rome* the seeds of Dissension were scattered very early amongst us; and a sowre humour had been ferment-

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ing in the Body of the Nation, both upon account of *Religion* and *Civil Interests*, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.

And more particularly yet; That which is call'd the *great Trespass* here in the *Text*, their *joining in affinity with the People of these abominations*, by whom they had been detain'd in a long Captivity: This, I say, seems to have had, both from the nature of the thing, and the just Judgment of God, no small influence upon a great part of the Miseries and Calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which *Poper*y had by the *Marriages* and *Alliances* of our *Princes*, for two or three Generations together, with those of *that Religion*, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to those, who have the Authority to do it, to make effectual provision by Law for the prevention of the like inconvenience and mischief in this Nation for ever.

2. Another *Parallel* between our Case and that in the *Text*, is, That *God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities did deserve*. And this acknowledgment we have as much reason to make for our
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selves, as *Ezra* had to do it in behalf of the *Jews* ; *Thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve.* Thou, our *God*, hast punish'd us ; there is the reason of so much mercy and mitigation. It is *God*, and not *Man*, with whom we have to do ; and therefore it is, that we *the children of men are not consumed.* And it is *our God* likewise, to whom we have a more peculiar relation, and with whom, by virtue of our Profession of *Christianity*, we are in *Covenant* : Thou *our God* hast punish'd us less than our *Iniquities* deserve. *He* might justly have pour'd forth all his *wrath*, and have made his *jealousie* to have smok'd against us, and have blotted out the remembrance of us from under *Heaven* : *He* might have given us up to the will of our *Enemies*, and into the hands of those whose tender mercies are cruelty : *He* might have brought us into the net which they had spread for us, and have laid a terrible load of affliction upon our loins, and suffer'd insolent men to ride over our heads, and them that hated us with a perfect hatred, to have had the rule over us : But he was graciously pleas'd to remember mercy in the midst of judgment, and to repent himself for his servants, when he saw that their

power was gone, and that things were come to that extremity, that we were in all humane probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own Deliverance.

3. The *last Parallel* between our Case, and *that* in the Text, is the great and wonderful *Deliverance* which God hath wrought for us. And whilst I am speaking of this, *God is my witness, whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son*, that I do not say one word upon this Occasion in flattery to men, but in true thankfulness to Almighty God, and constrain'd thereto from a just sense of his great mercy to usall, in this marvellous Deliverance, in this *mighty Salvation which he wrought for us*. So that we may say with Ezra, *Since thou our God hast given us such a Deliverance as THIS*: So great, that we know not how to compare it with any thing but it Self. God hath *given us this Deliverance*. And therefore, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the praise*. For thou knowest, and we are all conscious to our selves, that we did in no wise deserve it; but quite the contrary. God hath *given* it, and it ought to be so much the welcomer to us, for coming from such a Hand. *It is the Lord's doing*, and therefore ought to be the more
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marvellous in our eyes. It is a Deliverance full of *Mercy*, and I had almost said, full of *Miracle*. *The Finger of God* was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine interposition. And if we will not *wisely consider the Lord's doings*, we have reason to stand in awe of that Threatning of *His*, *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* Psal. 28.5.

It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The *Greatness* of it; and the *strangeness* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenness*, and *Easiness* of it.

The *Greatness* of it; it was a great Deliverance, from the greatest Fears, and from the greatest Dangers; the apparent and imminent Danger of the saddest Thraldom and *Bondage*, *Civil* and *Spiritual*; both of *Soul* and *Body*.

And it was brought about in a very extraordinary manner, and by very *strange* means: Whether we consider the *greatness* and *difficulty* of the Enterprize; or the closeness and *secrecy* of the Design, which must of necessity be communica-

ted at least to the *Chief* of those who were to assist and engage in it : Especially the *States* of the *United Provinces*, who were then in so much danger themselves, and wanted more than their own Forces for their own Defence and Security : a kindness never to be forgotten by the *English Nation*. And besides all this, the difficulties and disappointments which happen'd, after the Design was open and manifest, from the uncertainties of *Wind* and *Weather*, and many other *Accidents* impossible to be foreseen and prevented. And yet in Conclusion a strange concurrence of all things, on all sides, to bring the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy issue and effect.

And we must not here forget the many *Worthies* of our *Nation*, who did so generously run all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the preservation of our *Religion*, and the asserting of our ancient *Laws* and *Liberties*.

These are all strange and unusual means ; but which is stranger yet, the very counsels and methods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counsel and contrivance of our own could have

have done it. For even the *Jesuits*, those formal *Politicians* by *Book* and *Rule*, without any consideration or true knowledge of the temper, and interest, and other circumstances of the People they were designing upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I say, the *Jesuits*, who for so long a time, and for so little reason, have affected the reputation of the deepest and craftiest *States-men* in the World, have upon this great Occasion, and when their whole *Kingdom of Darknes* lay at stake, by a more than ordinary *infatuation* and *blindness*, so outwitted and over-reach'd themselves in their own counsels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our Deliverance from the Destruction which they had designed to bring upon us, than all our wisest and best Friends could have done.

And then, if we consider further, how sudden and surprizing it was, so that we could hardly believe it when it was accomplish'd; and like the Children of *Israel*, when the Lord turned again the Captivity of *Zion*, we were like them that dream. When all things were driving on furiously, and in great haste, then God gave an unexpected check to the Designs

of men, and stopp'd them in their full *carriere*. Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few Months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of our fears and troubles? God hath at once scatter'd all our fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatness and suddenness of our Deliverance. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And lastly, If we consider the cheapness and easiness of this Deliverance. All this was done without a *Battel*, and almost without *Blood*. All the danger is, lest we should loath it, and grow sick of it, because it was so very easy. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a *Red Sea* of Blood, we would have valued it more. But this surely is great wantonness, and whatever we think of it, one of the highest provocations imaginable: For there can hardly be a fouler and blacker Ingratitude towards Almighty God, than to slight so great a Deliverance, only because it came to us so easily, and hath cost us so very cheap.

I will mention but one Circumstance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our observation. That God seems
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in this Last Deliverance, in some sort to have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this *Nation* against all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our *Reformation*. Our wonderful Deliverance from the formidable *Spanish Invasion* design'd against us, happen'd in the Year 1588. And now just a *hundred* years after, God was pleas'd to bring about this *last* great and most happy Deliverance. That horrid *Gunpowder Conspiracy*, without *Precedent*, and without *Parallel*, was design'd to have been executed upon the *Fifth Day* of *November*; the same Day upon which his *Highness* the *Prince of Orange* landed the *Forces* here in *England* which he brought hither for our *Rescue*. So that this is a *Day* every way worthy to be solemnly set apart and joyfully celebrated by this *Church* and *Nation*, throughout all Generations; as the fittest of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great Deliverances which God hath wrought for *Us*, from *Popery*, and its inseparable Companion, *Arbitrary Power*. And we may *then* say with the *Holy Psalmist*, *This is the Lord's* Psal. 118.
doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is 23, 24.
the

the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Secondly, As the Case in the Text is much like Ours, so let us take heed that the Doom and Sentence there be not so too. If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, and since God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities did deserve; should we again break his Commandments, and join in affinity with the People of these Abominations, would He not be angry with us till he had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? What could we in reason expect after all this, but utter ruin and destruction? We may here apply, as St. Paul does, God's Dealing with the People of Israel, to the Times of the Gospel; for he speaks of it as an Example and Admonition to all Ages to the end of the

World. Now these things, says the Apo-

1 Cor. 10. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. stle, were our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them, &c. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents. For the explication of this passage we must have recourse to the History, which gives this

account

account of it. *And the People spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the Wildernes?* &c. impeaching God and his Servant *Moses*, as if by this Deliverance they had put them into a much worse condition than they were in when they were in Egypt. *And the Lord sent fiery Serpents among the People, and they bit the People, and much People of Israel died.* But how was this a tempting of Christ? Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted; that is, let not us, now under the Gospel, tempt our Saviour and Deliverer, as the *Israelites* did theirs, by slighting that great Deliverance, and by speaking against God, and against Moses. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer. And how far this may concern Us, and all Others, to the end of the World, who shall tempt Christ, the great Patron and Deliverer of his Church, and murmur without cause, as the *Israelites* did, at the Deliverances which He works for them, and against the Instruments of it, the Apostle tells us in the next words: *Now all these things happened unto* V. II.
them for Ensamples, or Types; and they are written for our admonition upon whom
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the ends of the World are come. Let us not tempt Christ; who is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his Church from the Tyranny of Antichrist.

To draw now towards a Conclusion; I will comprehend my Advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few words as I can.

Let us use this great *Deliverance* which God hath given us, [*such a Deliverance as this*] from our *Enemies*, and from the *Hand of all that hate us*; not by using Them as they would have done Us, had we fallen under their Power, with great Insolence, and Rage, and Cruelty; but with great Moderation and Clemency making as few Examples of Severity as will be consistent with our future security from the like Attempts upon our *Religion* and *Laws*: And even in the Execution of *Justice* upon the greatest *Offenders*, let us not give so much countenance to the ill *Examples* which have been set of *Extravagant Fines* and *Punishments*, as to imitate those Patterns which with so much reason we abhor; no, not in the Punishment of the *Authors* of them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be so wise, as not to forfeit the fruits of this

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Deliverance, and to hinder our selves of the benefit and advantage of it, by Breaches and Divisions among our selves. As we have no reason to desire it, so I think we can hardly ever hope to understand *Popery* better, and the Cruel Designs of it, than we do already, both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this *Nation*, and likewise from that dismal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in *One* of our Neighbour *Nations*, which hath long pretended to the Profession of the most refin'd and *moderate Popery* in the World; but hath now at last shewed it self in its true Colours, and in the perfection of a persecuting Spirit; and have therein given us a most sad and deplorable *Instance*, of a *Religion* corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be possible, is worse than *None*.

And since, by the undeserved Mercy of God to us, we have, upon such easy terms in comparison, escap'd their Rage and Fury; let us now at length resolve, never to *join in affinity with the People of these Abominations*; since our *Alliances* with them by *Marriage* have had so fatal an Influence, both upon the *publick Peace* and

and Tranquility of the *Nation*, and upon the Welfare also of *private Families*. I have known *Many* Instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw *One* that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those *Protestant Families* in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful *Matches* have been made: Not that such *Marriages* are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent Danger and Temptation to which those of our *Church and Religion* that enter into them do evidently expose themselves, of being seduc'd from their Religion; not by the good Arguments which the other can offer to that purpose, but by the ill Arts which they have the Confidence and the Conscience to make use of in the making of *Profelytes*.

And let us pay our most hearty and thankful Acknowledgments, chiefly and in the first place to *Almighty God*, the Blessed *Author* of this *Deliverance*; and under *Him*, to that happy *Instrument*, whom God hath been pleased, in great pity to this sinful and unworthy *Nation*, to raise up on purpose for it, his Highness the Prince of *Orange*; and to that end did in his All-wise Providence lay the Foundation
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tion of our then future *Deliverance*, in that *auspicious Match* which was concluded here in *England*, about eleven years ago, between this Renowned *Prince* and our Excellent *Princess*.

This is that most Illustrious House of *Nassau* and *Orange*, which God hath so highly honoured *above all the Families* of the Earth, to give a Check to the Two Great aspiring *Monarchies* of the *West*, and bold *Attempters* upon the *Liberties* of *Europe*: To the *One*, in the last Age; and to the *Other*, in the present. As if the *Princes* of this Valiant and Victorious *Line* had been of the *Race* of *Hercules*, born to rescue Mankind from Oppression, and to quell Monsters.

And *lastly*, let us beseech Almighty God, all whose Ways and Works are perfect, That he would *establisb that which he hath wrought*, and still carry it on to further and greater Perfection. Which, after such an *Earnest* of his Favour and Good Will to us, we have no reason to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own *fickleness* and *inconstancy*, disgusting the *Deliverance* now it is come, which we so earnestly desir'd before it came; if by our ingrateful *Murmurings* and *Discontents*, by our
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own foolish *Heats* and *Animosities*, kindled and carried on by the ill designs of some, working upon the tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious pretences of *Conscience* and *Loyalty*: I say, if by *some* or *all* these ways we do not refuse the Blessing which God now offers, and defeat and frustrate the merciful Design of this wonderful Revolution; God will still *rejoice over us*, to do us good, and *think thoughts of Peace towards us*, *thoughts of good*, and *not of evil*, to give us an *expected end* of our long Troubles and Confusions. But if we will *not know*, in this our day, the things which belong to our Peace, our Destruction will then be of our selves; and there will be no need that God should be *angry with us*, for we shall be undone by our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way and Means of our being saved; and so *be angry with one another till we be consumed*. Which God, of his infinite Goodness, give us all the Grace and Wisdom to prevent; for his Mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ*, to whom, with Thee, O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and ever. *Amen.*

*Of Forgiveness of Injuries, and
against Revenge.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N

A T

WHITEHALL, March 8. 168⁸₉.

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*Of Forgiveness of Injuries, and
against Revenge.*

M A T T H. V. 44.

*But I say unto you, love your enemies ;
bless them that curse you ; do good to
them that hate you ; pray for them
that despitefully use you, and perse-
cute you.*

THE Gospel hath promised forgive-
ness of Sins to us upon *two* Con-
ditions ; That we sincerely repent of the
Sins which we have committed against
God ; and, That we heartily forgive to
men the injuries and offences which they
have been guilty of towards us.

I shall at this time, by God's Assistance,
treat of the latter of these, from the
Words which I have recited to you ;
which are part of our Saviour's excellent

Sermon upon the Mount. In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Natural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of greater perfection, than either the Law of *Moses* or the *Natural* Law, in their largest extent, did contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce* except only in case of *Adultery*; and likewise *Revenge*; none of which were forbidden either by the *Law* of *Nature*, or by the *Law* which was given by *Moses*.

And to these *Prohibitions* our *Blessed Saviour* adds several new *Precepts* of greater perfection than any Laws that were extant before. *But I say unto you, love your enemies.* The *Jewish* Law commanded them to *love their Neighbour*, meaning their brethren and those of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us *to love our enemies*, hath in the most emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love *all men*. For if any were to be excluded from our *Charity*, none so likely to be so as our *Enemies*. So that after a command to love our *Enemies* it was needless to name any others; because men are naturally apt to love those that love them.

I say unto you, love your enemies; here the

the inward affection is requir'd. *Bless them that curse you*; here outward Civility and Affability are requir'd, in opposition to rude and uncivil Language; for so *blessing and cursing* do in *Scripture* frequently signify. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*. These are the highest expressions of Enmity that can be, *calumny* and *cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these *two* tenderest Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to secure the sincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to express it by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I say, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to dissemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for ourselves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of Him for others.

You see what is the Duty here required; That we bear a sincere affection to our most malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon occasion to give real testimony of it.

And because this may seem a hard duty,

ty, and not so easy to be reconciled either to our Inclination, or our Reason; I shall endeavour to shew, that this Law is not only reasonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more easy and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary: And that upon *four* Considerations; which I shall endeavour to represent with their just advantage, and so as may, I hope, not only convince our Judgments of the reasonableness of this Precept, but likewise bend and sway our Wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we consider the nature of the *act* here requir'd, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a mere Passion, but under the government of our Reason, is the most natural, and easy, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in Humane Nature: Whereas *ill will*, and *hatred*, and *revenge*, are very troublesome and vexatious Passions. Both the devising of mischief, and the accomplishment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneasy: and the consequences of it many times pernicious to our selves. The very design of Revenge is troublesome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural fermentation

mentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always restless, his very soul is stung, swells and boiles, is in pain and anguish, hath no ease, no enjoyment of it self so long as this Passion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with some present pleasure, but that pleasure is unreasonable and brutish, momentary and short, like a flash of Lightning, which vanisheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly said that Revenge is sweet, but to a calm and considerate mind Patience and Forgiveness are sweeter, and do afford a much more rational and solid and durable pleasure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodness are a far more pleasing and delightful spectacle, than of our Rage and Cruelty. And no sort of thought does usually haunt men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in way of Revenge.

Besides that the consequences of this Passion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our selves. For the Revenge of one injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the same reason to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endless circulation of Injuries and Revenges. So that whoever

seeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the issue take it upon himself, and whilst he thinks to transfer the injury which he hath receiv'd upon him that did it, he doubles it upon himself.

Such, and so great are the troubles and inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: but *there is no torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently says. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of displeasure or revenge towards any man, is the easiest posture, the most pleasant state of the Mind. So that if not for their sakes, yet for our own, we should *Love our Enemies and do good to them that hate us*; because to be thus affected towards all men, is as great a kindness to our selves as it is charity to others.

II. If we consider the qualification of the *Object*; it is *our Enemy* whom we are requir'd to *Love*. In whom though there be something that is justly disgustful, yet there is something also that is lovely; and if we persist in our kindness to him, notwithstanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a sincere and firm friendship.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our selves personal enmity towards us is
one

one of the most inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worst in it self. If we could be impartial and lay aside prejudice, we might perhaps discern several very lovely qualities in him who hates us: And Vertue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an Enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not so great and inexcusable a fault, as we apprehend; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that degree, nor so altogether without cause, as we imagine; possibly we have provok'd him, or by his own mistake, or through the malicious representation of others, he may be induc'd to think so: And are not we our selves liable to the like misapprehensions concerning others? of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and ashamed: and so may he, and then his enmity will cease, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wish in the like case that others would have with us.

At the worst, though never so sore and causeless an Enemy, though never so bad a Man, yet he is a Man, and as such, hath something in him which the blindest Passion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the same Nature with our selves, which we cannot hate, or despise, without

out hatred and contempt of our selves. Let a man's faults be what they will, they do not destroy his Nature and make him cease to be a Man.

The *two* great Foundations of Love are *Relation* and *Likeness*. No one thing, says Tully, is so like, so equal to another, as one man is to another. What difference soever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our Enemy, yet he is still like us in the main; and perhaps, but too like us in that for which we find so much fault with him, a proneness to offer affronts and injuries.

Dr. Bar-
row.

And there is an essential *Relation*, as well as *Likeness*, between one man and another; which nothing can ever dissolve, because it is founded in that which no man can divest himself of, in *Humane Nature*. So far is it from being true, which Mr. Hobbs asserts as the fundamental Principle of his *Politicks*, That men are naturally in a state of War and enmity with one another; that the contrary Principle, laid down by a much deeper and wiser man, I mean Aristotle, is most certainly true, That men are naturally akin and friends to each other. Some unhappy accidents and occasions may make men Enemies, but naturally every man is friend

to another : and that is the surest and most unalterable reason of things which is founded in Nature, not that which springs from mutable accidents and occasions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a *Man*, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an Enemy.

Consider farther that an Enemy, even whilst he is exercising his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage ; which though they do not proceed from kindness, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious Censures of our Enemies, if we make a right use of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the Civilities of our best friends. We can easily afford, nay the wisest Men can hardly forbear, to love a *Flatterer* ; to embrace him, and to take him into our bosom ; and yet an open *Enemy* is a thousand times better and less dangerous than *he*. It is good for many men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occasion of reforming those faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almost said would have had the Friendship, to have told them of.

But what if after all, this Enemy of
ours,

ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our best Friends? For so reconciled Enemies usually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and Kindness will. An obstinate goodness is apt to conquer even the worst of Men. It is hardly in the nature of man to withstand the kindness of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greatest injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the first opportunity taken to oblige him, is so very surprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worst disposition and to melt down the hardest temper. So that we should love our Enemies, if not for what they are at present, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by these means they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we consider the Excellency and Generosity of the thing it self. *To love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us,* is the perfection of goodness, and the advancement of it to its highest pitch. It is the most excellent and perfect act of the greatest and most perfect of all Graces and Vertues, I mean *Charity*; which by *St. Paul* is call'd *the bond of perfection*; and by

by St. James, the perfect and the Royal Law: because it inspires men with a greatness of Mind fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous Goodness and Clemency, even towards great Enemies and Offenders, so far as is consistent with the Publick Good. Love for love is but Justice and Gratitude; Love for no love is favour and kindness; but Love for hatred and enmity is a most Divine Temper, a steady and immutable Goodness that is not to be stirr'd by provocation, and so far from being conquer'd that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and Enmity do not extinguish Love, what can? This is Goodness indeed; not only without Merit and Obligation, without Invitation or Motive; but against all reasonable expectation, and in despite of all Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return good for evil and love for hatred, is one of the greatest arguments of a great Mind, and of deep wisdom and consideration: For naturally our *first* inclinations and thoughts towards our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but our *second* and wiser thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveness is much more generous

nerous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another man than this, that when the Injury began on his part the Kindness should begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more desirable Conquest to *overcome evil with good*, than with *evil*. By *this*, we can only Conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that ; but by the *other*, we certainly Conquer our selves, and perhaps our Enemy too ; overcoming him in the noblest manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually subduing him to be our Friend. This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wise *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meer dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wise delay ; without ever striking a stroke, or shedding one drop of blood, to vanquish an Enemy , and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battel.

Dr. Barrow.

Revenge is blind and rash, and does always proceed from impotency and weakness of Mind. 'Tis Anger that spurs men on to it ; and Anger is certainly one of the foolishhest Passions of Humane Nature, and which commonly betrays men to the most imprudent and unreasonable things.

things. So Solomon observes, *He that is* Prov. 14.
hasty of spirit exalteth folly; and again, ^{29.}
Anger resteth in the bosom of Fools: But to Eccl. 7. 9.
 be able to bear provocation, is an argu-
 ment of great Wisdom; and to forgive
 it, of a great Mind: So the same *Wise-man*
 tells us, *He that is slow to anger is better* Prov. 16.
than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spi- 32.
rit, than he that taketh a City. It is a
 greater thing, in case of great Provocati-
 on, to calm a mans own spirit, than to
 storm and take a strong City.

Whereas the Angry Man loseth and lets
 fall the government of himself, and lays
 the Reins upon the neck of the *Wild Beast*,
 his own brutish Appetite and Passion;
 which hurries him on first to Revenge,
 and then to Repentance for the folly
 which he hath been guilty of in gratify-
 ing so unreasonable a Passion. For it very
 seldom happens that any man executes an
 act of Revenge, but the very next mo-
 ment after he hath done it, he is sorry for
 it, and wisheth he had not done it: Where-
 as Patience and Forgiveness do wisely
 prevent both the mischief to others, and
 the trouble to our selves, which is usual-
 ly consequent upon Revenge.

IV. If we consider the perfection and
 prevalency of the *Examples* which the
 Gospel

Gospel proposeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this Duty. And they are the *Examples* of *God* himself, and of the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

1. The Example of *God* himself. The *Scripture* doth frequently set before us the goodness of *Gods* common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern. And this is the Argument whereby our Blessed *Saviour* presseth the Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verse* immediately after it; *That ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his Rain to fall on the just and the unjust.* The same Argument *Seneca* also urgeth to the same purpose. *How many* (says he) *are unworthy of the light, and yet the Day visits them?* And speaking of the *Gods*, *They bestow,* (says he) *their benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those who make a bad construction and use of their kindness.* And almost in the very words of our *Saviour*, *Etiam sceleratis Sol oritur, &c.* *The Sun riseth even upon the most vile and profligate persons, and the Seas are open to Pirates.*

Thus is *God* affected towards those who are guilty of the greatest provocations towards Him. He bestows upon them the gifts of his Common Providence;

dence ; and not only so, but is ready to forgive innumerable Offences to them for *Christ's* sake. This Pattern the *Apostle* proposeth to our imitation, *Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you : Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children.* Eph. 4.32. chap. 5. 1. This temper and disposition of Mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the Divine Nature ; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of Beings ? And so our *B. Saviour* concludes this Argument, in the last Verse of this Chapter, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect ;* which *St. Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing which we think to be so hard and difficult, you see that we have Perfection it self for our Pattern. And this Example ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reason there is why we should do thus to one another ; than why *God* should do thus to us. Our Offences against *God* are more and greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us : Besides, that there are many Considerations which ought to

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tye up our hands, and may reasonably restrain us from falling furiously upon one another, which can have no place at all in God. We may justly fear, that the consequence of our **Revenge** may return upon our selves, and that it may come to be our own case to stand in need of Mercy and Forgiveness from others: And therefore out of necessary caution and prudence, we should take heed not to set any bad example in this kind, lest it should recoil upon our selves. We who stand so much in need of Forgiveness our selves, ought in all reason to be very easy to forgive others. But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real injury or suffering. God can never stand in need of pity or forgiveness; and yet of his own meer Goodness, without any interest or design, how *slow* is he to *anger*, and how *ready* to *forgive*?

And, which comes yet nearer to us, there is also the *Example* of the *Son of God*, our *Blessed Saviour*; who in our Nature, and in case of the greatest Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practise this Vertue to the height: And all this for our *sakes*, as well as for our *Example*. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himself submitted to with the greatest

greatest Patience and Constancy of Mind;
in our *stead*, and wholly for our advantage.

He *render'd good for evil* to all Mankind;
and shew'd greater *Love* to us, whilst we
were Enemies to Him, than ever any
man did to his Friend.

He *pray'd* for those *that despitefully used him and persecuted him*. And this, not upon cool consideration, after the injury was done, and the pain of his Sufferings was over; but whilst the sense and smart of them was upon him, and in the very Agony and bitterness of Death: In the height of all his anguish, he pour'd out his Soul an Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they shed it; pleading with God, in the behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuse that was possible to be made for their *Malice*, that is, their *Ignorance*; and spending his last breath in that most charitable Prayer for them, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

The last Declaration which he made of his mind, was *Love* to his *Enemies*; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd was an earnest Request to God for the *Forgiveness* of his *Persecutors* and *Murderers*.

So that if any *Example* ought to be dear

100 *Of Forgiveness of injuries,*

to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our *Blessed Saviour* should ; since the Injuries which he suffer'd have saved us from suffering, and the greatest *Blessing* and *Happiness* that ever befel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example* : And then with what Confidence, nay with what Conscience, can we pretend to share in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Vertues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive Kindness and Charity of the Son of God to the sinful Sons of Men, after all our bitterest Enmity towards him, and most cruel and injurious Usage of him ; and all this Charity exercis'd towards us, whilst he was under the actual sense and suffering of these things : and yet not be provok'd by an Example so admirable in it self, and of such mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewise*?

But notwithstanding the power of these *Arguments* to perswade to this *Duty*, I must not dissemble some *Objections* which are, I believe, in many of your minds against it ; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give some satisfaction. And they are these :

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does
not

not seem so well to agree with another of our B'essed Saviour's, in another *Evangelist*, *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Luke 17. 3, 4. Here our Blessed Saviour seems not to require Forgiveness, unless he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it: but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive those who are so far from repenting of their Enmity, that they still pursue it, and exercise it upon us. Thus our Lord teacheth us, and thus *He* himself practised towards his *Persecutors*.

But this appearance of Contradiction will quickly vanish, if we consider that *Forgiveness* is sometimes taken chiefly for *abstaining from Revenge*; and so far we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilst they continue so, and though they do not repent: And not only so, but we are also to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, especially of common Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept in the *Text*. But sometimes *Forgiveness* does signify a *perfect Reconciliation* to those that have offended us, so as to take them again into our *Friendship*; which

they are by no means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it aside. And this is plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

2. It is further objected, That this seems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous consequence to our selves; because by bearing one Injury so patiently, and forgiving it so easily, we invite more; and not only tempt our Enemy to go on, but others also by his Example to do the like: Which will make ill natur'd Men to provoke us on purpose, with a crafty design to wrest benefits from us: For what better Trade can a man drive, than to gain Benefits in exchange for Injuries?

To this I answer *three* things:

First, It is to be feared that there are but few so very good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Perhaps, of those that call themselves *Christians*, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one against him, that this Enemy of his will take the first opportunity to take his Revenge upon him.

Secondly, It is also on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are so prodigiously

digiously bad, as to make so barbarous a return for the unexpected kindness of a generous Enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this Duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it should fall out otherwise, yet this would not be reason enough to discourage our goodness, especially since the kindness which we do to our Friends is liable almost to an equal Objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our Enemies: it having been often seen that great Benefits, and such as are beyond requital, instead of making a man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

Thirdly, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Precept, that our goodness should be blind and void of all prudence and discretion, but that it should be so managed, as to make our Enemy sensible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and so, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reason for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in such a manner as may be most effectual, both to reclaim the Offender, and likewise to secure our selves against future and further Injuries.

3. *Last-*

3. *Lastly*, It is objected, What can we do more to our best Friends, than to love them and bless them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our Enemies and our Friends?

Yes surely; and so we may, notwithstanding this Precept: For there are degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of several rates and sizes. Those of the first rate we may with reason bestow upon our Friends, and with those of a second or third rate there is all the reason in the World why our Enemies should be very well contented. Besides that we may abstain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wish him and do him good; and yet it will not presently be necessary that we should take him into our bosom, and treat and trust him as our intimate and familiar Friend. For every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our Friend; much less one that hath been our Enemy, and perhaps is so still. There must be a great change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we must have had long experience of him, before it will be fit, if ever it be so, to take him into our Friendship.

All that now remains is to make some *Inferences* from the Discourse which I have

have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they shall be these four :

I. If we think it so very difficult to demean our selves towards our Enemies, as the *Christian* Religion doth plainly require us to do ; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to our selves. One of the first Principles of Humane Wisdom, in the conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, To have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be possible, to our selves. St. *Paul* lays a great stress upon this, and presseth it very earnestly. For after he had forbidden Revenge, *Recompence to no man evil for evil.* Rom. 12.
As if he were very sensible how hard a 17. matter it is to bring men to this, he adviseth in the next words, to prevent, if it be possible, the occasions of Revenge, *If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men :* V. 18. That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any man. And that for two weighty Reasons.

The *first* I have already intimated ; because it is so very hard to behave our selves towards Enemies as we ought. This we shall

shall find to be a difficult Duty to Flesh and Blood; and it will require great Wisdom, and Consideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of this Command: For the fewer Enemies we have, the less occasion will there be of contesting this hard Point with our selves.

And the *other* Reason is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, because Enemies will come of themselves, and let a man do what he can, he shall have some. Friendship is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will spring up of themselves without our care and toil. *The Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the *Devil*, will sow these *Tares in the night*, and when we least discern it will scatter the Seeds of Discord and Enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the Envy, or the Malice, or the Mistakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to see what care and pains some men will take, to provoke Mankind against them; how they will lay about them, and snatch at opportunities to make themselves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occasion slip

slip by them : But all this care and fear surely is needless ; we may safely trust an ill-natur'd World, that we shall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make personal Enemies to himself ; for these are the *forest* and the *surest* of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will sit hardest upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greatest, and yet they are many times more easily forgiven, than those which are done to particular Persons. For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove to be no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Humane Society, do not so sensibly touch and sting men, as personal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in passion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are so. Heat of Prosecution belongs to particular Persons ; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and desire to Revenge them, and diligence to set on and sharpen the Law, that is chiefly to be dreaded : And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almost as few private as publick *Acts* of *Oblivion* pass'd in the World ;

World ; and they commonly pass as slowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almost quite lost.

- II. II. *Secondly*, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others? To those who never dis-oblinded us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed ; to those more especially, who stand in a nearer relation to us ; to our natural Kindred, and to our spiritual Brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by the common Bond of Christianity ; and lastly, to our Benefactors, and those who have been before-hand with us in obligation : For all these are so many special Ties and Endearments of men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Justice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all these and our Enemies we ought to make a very wide and sensible difference, in our Carriage and Kindness towards them. And if we do not do so, we represent our *Saviour* as an unreasonable Lawgiver, and do perversly interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reasonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindness is here required towards our Enemies

enemies, it is certain that so much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deserved at our hands: nothing being more certain than that our *Blessed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any Precept of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Justice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the least to the common Reason of Mankind.

III. *Thirdly*, Hence we learn the excellency and the Reasonableness of the *Christian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty so high in things which do so directly tend to the Perfection of *Humane Nature*, and to the Peace of *Humane Society*; and, which if all things be rightly consider'd, are most agreeable to the clearest and best Reason of Mankind: So that those things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by some few of the wiser sort, as Heroical Instances of Goodness and above the common rate of Humanity, are now by the *Christian Religion* made the indispensable Duties of all Mankind. And the Precepts of no other Religion, that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced Humane Nature so much above it self, and are so well calculated for the Peace and Happiness of the World, as
the

the Precepts of the *Christian Religion* are : for they strictly forbid the doing of Injuries, by way of prevention ; and in case they happen, they endeavour to put a present stop to the progress of them, by so severely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it must be acknowledged to be a very untoward *Objection* against the Excellency and the Efficacy of the *Christian Religion*, that the Practice of so many *Christians* is so unequal to the Perfection of these Precepts. For who is there in the Changes and Revolutions of Humane Affairs, and when the Wheel of Providence turns them uppermost, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will give them any Quarter ? Nay, that does not greedily seize upon the first opportunities of Revenge, and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a sudden stoop upon them with all his force and violence ; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces ?

So that after all our Boasts of the Excellency of our Religion, where is the practice of it ? This, I confess, is a terrible *Objection* indeed ; and I must intreat of you, *my Brethren*, to help me to the best

best Answer to it : Not by any nice *Distinctions* and *Speculations* about it, but by the careful and honest Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* against *Philosophy*, that many that were Philosophers in their Opinions were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never thought by wise men to be a good *Objection* against *Philosophy*. And unless we will lay more weight upon the *Objections* against Religion, and press them harder than we think it reasonable to do in any other Case, we must acknowledge likewise, that this *Objection* against Religion is of no force. Men do not cast off the *Art* of *Physick*, because many *Physicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not themselves follow those Prescriptions which they think fit to give to others: and there is a plain reason for it because their swerving from their own Rules doth not necessarily signify that their Rules are not good, but only that their Appetites are unruly, and too hard and headstrong for their Reason: Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules may be very reasonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. IV. The *fourth* and *last Inference* from this whole Discourse shall be this, That being convinced by what hath been said upon this Argument, of the Reasonableness of this Duty, we would resolve upon the Practice of it, when ever there is occasion offer'd for it in the course of our Lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great occasion for it : I shall only say, that whenever there is so, nothing can be tied more strictly upon us than this Duty is.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confirmation to me, to see the *Humanity* of the *Protestant Religion*, so plainly discovering it self, upon so many occasions, in the practice of the Professours of it. And setting aside all other advantages which *our Religion* hath been evidently shewn to have above *Popery* in point of Reason and Argument, I cannot for my life but think *that* to be the best Religion which makes the best Men, and from the nature of its Principles is apt to make them so; most kind and merciful, and charitable; and most free from Malice, and Revenge, and Cruelty.

And therefore our *Blessed Saviour*, who *knew what was in man* better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctance

Slowness and backwardness to the practice of this Duty, hath urged it upon us by such forcible and almost violent Arguments, that if we have any tenderness for our selves, we cannot refuse Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appease God towards us, so long as we our selves are implacable to Men; *Verse 23d. of this Chapter, If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way: first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* To recommend this Duty effectually to us, *He* gives it a preference to all the *positive* Duties of Religion: *First go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Till this Duty be discharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great reason declare it to be a necessary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be *in Love and Charity with our Neighbours*; because this is a *Moral Duty*, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *positive* part of Religion, such as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to G O D; especially

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pecially since in this *Blessed Sacrament* of *Christ's* Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveness of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us: Which how can we hope for from *G O D*, if we our selves be not ready to forgive one another?

He shall have judgment without mercy, says *St. James*, who hath shewed no mercy. And in that excellent *Form* of *Prayer* which our *Lord* himself hath given us, *He* hath taught us so to ask Forgiveness of *God*, as not to expect it from *Him*, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practice this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this *Petition* to *God*, [*Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that Trespas against us*;] we send up a terrible *Imprecation* against our selves, and do in effect beg of *God* not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our minds, our *Blessed Saviour* immediately after the recital of this *Prayer*, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this *Petition*, above all the rest; *For if*, says *He*, *ye forgive men their trespases, your heavenly*
Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespases, neither
will

Matth. 6.
14, 15.

will your Father forgive your trespasses.

And our Saviour hath likewise in his Gospel represented to us, both the reasonableness of this Duty, and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting Parable, deliver'd by him to this purpose: Concerning a *wicked Servant*, who, when *his Lord* had but just before forgiven him a vast Debt of *ten thousand Talents*, took his poor *Fellow-servant by the throat*, and, notwithstanding his humble Submission and earnest Intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to Prison for a trifling Debt of an *hundred Pence*. And the *Application* which he makes of this *Parable*, at the end of it, is very terrible, and such as ought never to go out of our minds; So likewise, says *He, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye do not from your hearts forgive every one his brother his trespasses.* One might be apt to think at first view, that this *Parable* was over done, and wanted something of a due *Decorum*; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been so mercifully and generously dealt withal, as upon his humble Request to have so huge a Debt so freely forgiven, should whilst the memory of so much Mercy was fresh upon him, even the ve-

Matth. 18.

23.

v. 35.

ry next moment, handle his *Fellow Servant*, who had made the same humble submission and request to him which he had done to his *Lord*, with so much roughness and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a Sum. This, I say, would hardly seem credible ; did we not see in experience how very unreasonable and unmerciful some men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from God, when they will shew none to Men.

The greatness of the Injuries which are done to us, is the reason commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makest this an Argument why thou canst not forgive thy Brother, lay thine hand upon thy heart, and bethink thy self how many more and much greater Offences thou hast been guilty of against God: Look up to that Just and Powerful Being that is above, and consider well, Whether thou dost not both expect and stand in need of more Mercy and Favour from *Him*, than thou canst find in thy heart to shew to thine offending Brother ?

We have all certainly great reason to expect that as we use one another, God will

will likewise deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Christians? And how hardly are the best of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them? And this, notwithstanding that all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness from God do depend upon it. How strangely inconsistent is our practice and our hope? And what a wide distance is there between our expectations from GOD, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope so easily to be forgiven, and yet to be so hard to forgive?

Would we have GOD, for *Christ's* sake, to forgive us those numberless and monstrous provocations which we have been guilty of against His Divine Majesty? And shall we not for *His* sake, for whose sake we our selves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be oblig'd to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and most miserable shall we be to all Eternity, if GOD do not all this to us, which we think to be so very hard and unreasonable for us to do to one another.

I have sometimes wonder'd how it should come to pass, that so many persons

should be so apt to despair of the Mercy and Forgiveness of G O D to them; especially considering what clear and express Declarations G O D hath made of his readiness to forgive our greatest Sins and Provocations upon our sincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we shall consider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are perswaded to refrain from flying upon those who have given us any considerable provocation. So that when men look into themselves, and shall carefully observe the motions of their own minds towards those against whom they have been justly exasperated, they will see but too much reason to think that Forgiveness is no such easy matter.

But our comfort in this case is, That G O D is not as *Man*; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but *as the Heavens are high above the Earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.*

And the best way to keep our selves from despairing of G O D's Mercy and Forgiveness to us, is to be easy to grant Forgiveness to others: And without this, as G O D hath reason to deny Forgiveness

giveness to us, so we our selves have all the reason in the World utterly to despair of it.

It would almost transport a *Christian* to read that admirable Passage of the Great *Heathen* Emperour and Philosopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*, *Can the Gods*, M. Aur. Antoni. lib. 7. says he, *that are Immortal, for the continuance of so many ages, bear without impatience with such and so many Sinners as have ever been; and not only so, but likewise take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: And dost thou so grievously take on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of those Sinners thyself.*

I will conclude this whole *Discourse* with those weighty and pungent *Sayings* of the wise *Son of Syrach*, *He that re-* Eccl. 23, 1, 2, 3, 4. *vengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, so shall thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon of the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own Sins?*

120 *Of Forgiveness of Injuries, &c.*

Enable us, O Lord, by thy Grace, to practise this excellent and difficult *Duty* of our Religion : . And then, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us* : For thy mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ* ; to whom with Thee, O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all *Honour and Glory, Adoration and Obedience*, both now and ever. *Amen.*

The

*The care of our Souls the One
thing needful.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

KING and QUEEN

A T

Hampton-Court, *April* the 14th. 1689.

W O I

*The care of our Souls the One
thing needful.*

LUKE. X. 42.

But one thing is needful.

IN the accounts of Wise men, one of the first Rules and Measures of human actions is this, *To regard every thing more or less, according to the degree of its consequence and importance to our happiness.* That which is most necessary to that End ought in all reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things only so far as they are consistent with that great End, and subservient to it.

Our B. Saviour here tells us that *there is one thing needful*, that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: And what *that* is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the Context, and the occasion of these Words, which was briefly this: Our *Saviour*, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertain'd at the house of two devout Sisters. The *elder*, who had the care and management of the Family and the Affairs of it, was imployed in making entertainment for such a *Guest*: The *other* sat at our *Saviour's* feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preach'd.

The *elder* finding her self not able to do all the business alone, desires of our *Saviour* that he would command her Sister to come and help her. Upon this our *Saviour* gives her this gentle reprehension, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* And what *that* is he declares in the next words, *And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*; that is, she hath chosen to take care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our *Saviour* doth not altogether blame *Martha* for her respectful care of Him, but commends her *Sister* for her greater care

care of her Soul ; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his *Doctrine*, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to His *Person*.

From the *Words* thus explain'd the *Observation* which I shall make is this.

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is *the one thing necessary*, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This *Observation* seems to be plainly contain'd in the *Text*. I shall handle it as briefly as I can ; and then by way of Application shall endeavour to persuade You and my self to mind this *one thing necessary*.

And in speaking to this serious and weighty Argument I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does consist.

Secondly, To convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I shall shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth consist.

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And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the *five* following *Particulars*, in which I think the main business of Religion and the due care of our Souls does consist.

First, In the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

Secondly, In the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

Thirdly, In the constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion.

Fourthly, In avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

Fifthly, In the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be
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be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary Principles and Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good Practice, wherein the life of Religion doth consist. And without this no man can be truly Religious. *Without faith*, saith the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, it is impossible to please God: Heb. 11. 6. *For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* Now these two expressions of *pleasing God* and *seeking Him*, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signify *Religion*, or the *Worship* and Service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and persuasion of these two fundamental Principles of all Religion, That *there is a God*, and, That *He will reward those that serve him*: Because unless a man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as Religion.

And this knowledge of the necessary Principles of Religion our *B. Saviour* calls *eternal Life*, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says He, to Joh. 17. 3. *know thee, the only true God; and Him whom*

whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ, that is, to be rightly instructed in the knowledge of the only true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord : Under which two general Heads are comprehended all the necessary Principles both of the Natural and of the Christian Religion.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to Salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is requir'd ; but only a teachable disposition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easie, and lye level to all capacities ; otherwise we must say, that God *who would have all men to be saved* hath not provided for the Salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true God and the light of Christianity are shed abroad in the world, all that enjoy the Gospel are, or may be, sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their happiness : unless such care be used, as is in the Church of *Rome*, to *take away the key of knowledge*, and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an unknown Tongue ; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable consideration, only it is to be hop'd that it is not true,

true, that the generality of Mankind are mad and have need to be kept in the dark. But supposing men to be allowed those means of knowledg which God affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens Understandings, but in their Wills: Only when men know these things, they must attend to them and consider them; that the light which is in their Understandings may warm their Hearts, and have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls consists in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them: In a more *particular* and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful sins, so far as we can call them to our remembrance; and in a *general* repentance for sins of *Ignorance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exercise whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true Repentance doth not consist only in an humble confession of our sins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them; but chiefly in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, and in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

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By the constant exercise hereof, we are put into a safe condition ; provided that we persevere in this holy resolution and course : But if we still retain the love and practice of any known sin, or if after we have taken up these good resolutions we return again to an evil course ; this is a clear evidence, either that our Repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are relaps'd into our former state : And then our Souls are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will continue in that dangerous state, till we have renew'd our Repentance and made it good in the following course of our lives.

III. The due care of our Souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, especially at proper times and upon more solemn occasions : By fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the Word of God with reverence and godly fear : By frequenting his publick Worship, and demeaning our selves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious Majesty of God, who observes our behaviour and sees into our hearts : And by receiving the B. Sacrament,

ment, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For these are not only outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness. And whoever neglects these Duties of Religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath neither a due sense of God, nor care of himself: For in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earnest design the End, when he neglects the best and most proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our Souls consists also in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the sword's point, and do endanger our Salvation as much as a deep wound in our Body would do our Life: And tho' such a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful Sin knows the dismal consequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at last: For upon

such a provocation God may leave the Sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart to proceed from evil to worse, and from one wickedness to another, till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the World is very pernicious to the Souls of men; because it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and designs; it tempts men to forsake God and Religion when their worldly interests come in competition with them; and betrays them to fraud, and falshood, and all kind of injustice, and *many other hurtful lusts which drown the Soul in perdition.*

But besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernible because it hath the face of Piety; and that is *Fa-
ction* in Religion: By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Religion either doth not at all, or but very little consist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsistent with several of the most eminent
Christian

Christian Graces and Vertues, as *humility, love, peace, meekness, and forbearance* towards those that differ from us; it hath likewise *two* very great mischiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to Religion and the Souls of men.

First, that it takes such men off from minding the more necessary and essential parts of Religion. They are so zealous about small things, *the tithing of mint and anise and cummin*, that they neglect the weightier things of the Law, Faith and Mercy, and Judgment, and the Love of God: They spend so much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leisure to mind the things that are necessary: And are so concern'd about little *Speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the Practice of Religion is almost wholly neglected by them: And they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Error and Heresy in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded people! that do not consider that the greatest Heresy in the World is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally

opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion: And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding than one fault of his Will.

Secondly, Another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great Piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very Religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the Out-works of Religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good Christians, but to be of such a Party, and to be list'd of such a Church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate and uncharitably to censure all the rest of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very sure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themselves *good Cathliques*, and all others *Heretiques*? And that having done this, they are in a
safe

safe condition; as if a mere Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any Church in the World that had this phantastical Privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of Religion will be neglected: Besides, that a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that Spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all Factions, but more especially in those of Religion.

V. The due care of our Souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good life; or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, in *exercising our selves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men*. For herein is Religion best seen, in the equal and uniform practice of every part of our Duty: Not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably

bly towards all men: Not only in restraining our selves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our Lusts, and governing our Passions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal: He must not only endeavour to secure his Head and Heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have dyed of it: In like manner, the care of our Souls consists in an universal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: Though we ought to have a more especial regard to those Duties which are more considerable and wherein Religion doth mainly consist; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chastity* in regard of our selves, *Charity* towards the poor, *Truth* and *Justice*, *Goodness* and *Kindness* towards all men: But then no other *Grace* and *Vertue*, though of an inferior

riour rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what Instances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an easy business and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and industry will serve for this purpose : To master and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Passions under the command and government of our Reason, and to attain to a good degree of every Christian Grace and Vertue : That *Faith* and *Hope* and *Charity* ; *Humility* and *Meekness* and *Patience*, may all *have their perfect work* ; and that, as *St. James* says, we *may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* ; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good Christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very short and easy business, and to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it : Which is so far from being the true Notion of Christian *Faith*, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very Defi-
nition

dition of *Presumption*. For the Bible plainly teacheth us, that unless our Faith *work by Charity*, and *purify our hearts* and reform our lives; unless like *Abraham's Faith* it be *perfected by works*, it is but a *dead Faith*, and will in no wise avail to our Justification and Salvation. And our *B. Saviour*, the great *Author and finisher of our Faith*, hath no where, that I know of, said one word to this purpose, That Faith separated from obedience and a good life will save any man: But He hath said very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiseth Blessedness to none, but those who live in the practice of those Christian Graces and Vertues which are particularly mention'd by Him in the beginning of his excellent

Matth. 5.
3, 4, &c.

Sermon upon the Mount; of Humility, and Repentance, and Meekness, and Righteousness, and Mercifulness, and Purity, and Peaceableness, and Patience under persecution and sufferings for Righteousness sake. And afterwards in the same

Matth. 7.
21.

Sermon, Not every one, saith He, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in heaven.

V. 24.

And again, Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him

him unto a wise man which built his house upon a Rock. And afterwards, He tells us, V. 26, 27. that whosoever builds his hopes of eternal happiness upon any other foundation, than the Faith of the Gospel and the Practice of its Precepts, doth *build his house upon the Sand*; which when it comes to be tryed by the *Rain* and the *Winds*, will *fall*; and the *fall of it will be great*. And elsewhere; *If ye know these things, happy* John 13, *are ye if ye do them*. And he does very severely check the vain confidence and presumption of those, who will needs rely upon Him for Salvation without keeping his commandments; *Why call ye me*, says Luke 6. 46. *He, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Does any man think that he can be saved without loving God and Christ? *And this*, saith St. John, *is the love of God, that* 1 Joh. 5. 3. *we keep his commandments*: and again, *He* 1 Joh. 2. 4. *that saith I know him*, and by the same reason, *he that saith I love him, and keepeth not his commandments, he is a lyar, and the truth is not in him*. If ye love me, saith our John 14. B. Lord, keep my commandments: And again, *He that hath my commandments and* V. 21. *keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*.

Does any man think, that any but the children of God shall be heirs of eternal Life?

1 Joh. 3. 7. Life? Hear then what St. John saith, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous* : And again, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the Bible, from the beginning of it to the end. If thou dost well, saith God to Cain, *thalt thou not be accepted?* And again, *Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings : Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.* And in the Gospel, when the young man came to our Saviour to be instructed by Him what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life, our Lord gives him this short and plain advice, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* And in the very last Chapter of the Bible we find this solemn declaration, *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates into the City,* that is, into Heaven, which the Apostle to the Hebrews calls the *City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* So vain and groundless is the imagination
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of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual Faith, without holiness and obedience of life.

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to convince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of minding Religion and our Souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean that it is so in order to some End, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessities of Life, without which men cannot subsist and live in a tolerable condition in this World: And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happiness being our chief End, whatever is necessary to *that* is more necessary than any thing else; and in comparison of *that*, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince men of the necessity of Religion, I shall briefly shew, That it is a certain way to happiness: That it is certain that there is no other way but this: And that if we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

First, That Religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have God's express Declaration and Promise, the best assurance that can be. He *that cannot lye* hath promised

promised *eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality* All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable is promised to us upon the terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present world*: A mighty reward for a little service; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days: A happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

Secondly, 'Tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms He hath said, *That if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live: That without holiness no man shall see the Lord*: And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of *Covetousness, or Adultery, or Malice, or Revenge, shall not enter into the kingdom of God*: And we have reason to believe Him concerning the terms of this happiness, and the means of attaining it, by whose favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it. And

And if God had not said it in his Word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only a condition of our happiness, but a necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purged from their Lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devilish Passions of *Malice*, and *Envy*, and *Revenge*, before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with *him who is love, and dwells in love.*

Thirdly, If we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable. The *Word of Truth* hath said it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if God should hold his hand, and should inflict no positive torment upon sinners, yet they could not spare themselves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked Life which they had led in this World, and the Stings of their own Consciences must necessarily make them miserable, whenever their own Thoughts are let loose upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they shall

shall have nothing either of pleasure or business to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those Miseries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be necessary for us to mind Religion ; without which we can neither attain that Happiness, nor escape those Miseries.

All that now remains, is to perswade you and my self seriously to mind this *one thing* necessary. And to this end, I shall apply my Discourse to two sorts of Persons ; those who are remiss in a matter of so great concernment, and those who are grossly careless, and mind it not at all.

First, To those who are remiss in a matter of such vast concernment : Who mind the business of Religion in some degree, but not so heartily and vigorously as a matter of such infinite consequence doth require and deserve.

And here I fear the very best are greatly defective ; and so much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the necessity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man shall ever be admitted into the Mansions of the Blessed : They believe likewise, that according to
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the degrees of every mans holiness and vertue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happiness in the other; that *he that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sows plentifully shall reap plentifully*; and that the measure of every mans reward shall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions? And notwithstanding we are allur'd by the most glorious promises and hopes, and aw'd by the greatest fears, and urg'd by the most forcible argument in the world, the evident necessity of the thing; Yet how faintly do we run the Race that is set before us? How frequently and how easily are we stop'd or diverted in our Christian course by very little temptations? How cold, and how careless, and how inconstant are we in the Exercises of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty? Did we act reasonably, and as Men use to do in matters of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity does depend.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security,

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curity, and resolve to make that the great business of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity: And when we are immers'd in the cares and business of this Life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought often come into our minds, That there is *one thing needful*, and which therefore deserves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another sort of persons, who are grossly careless of this *one thing necessary*, and do not seem to mind it at all: Who go on securely in an evil course, as if either they had no Souls, or no concernment for them. I may say to these as the Master of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was fast asleep in the Storm, *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God.* When our Souls are every moment in danger of sinking, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every Oar, and to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so precious from a danger so threatening and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of this Argument of necessity in other cases, and very carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of this life, and how to avoid those great temporal evils

evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering: But the great necessity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eternity, to secure the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the endless and insupportable miseries of another World. *This, this*, is the *one thing necessary*; and to *this* we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the necessity of things, and wisely weigh the concerns of this Life and the other in a just and equal balance, we should be ashamed to misplace our diligence and industry as we do; to bestow our best thoughts and time about these vain and perishing things, and to take no care about that *better part which cannot be taken from us*. Fond and vain men that we are! who are so solicitous how we shall pass a few days in this world, but matter not what shall become of us for ever.

But as careless as we are now about these things, time will come when we shall sadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God shall be pleas'd to grant us then so much time and use of our Reason as to be able

to recollect our selves, we shall then be convinc'd how great a necessity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being sensible of the value of them, till we are ready to despair of saving them.

But, blessed be God, this is not yet our case, though we know not how soon it may be. Let us then be wise, and consider these things in time, lest Death and Despair should overtake and oppress us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to consider that this is the best opportunity of your Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now most capable of the best impressions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin*: *This is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.*

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might: For it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, that the best thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible World which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware : Let us but judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them : And let us live now, as after a few days we shall every one of us wish with all our Souls that we had liv'd ; and be as serious, as if we were ready to step into the other World, and to enter upon that change which Death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange stupidity of Men ! That a change so near, so great, so certain, should affect us so coldly, and be so little consider'd and provided for by us : That the things of Time should move us so much, and the things of Eternity so little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it ?

If we be Christians, and do verily be-

lieve the things which I am speaking of, and that after a few days more are pass'd Death will come, and draw aside that thick Veil of sense and security which now hides these things from us; and shew us that fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth to think upon: I say, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for Death and a better Life, as may give him that constancy and firmness of Spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great Change without amazement; and to have a mind almost equally poiz'd between that strong inclination of Nature which makes us desirous to live, and that wiser dictate of Reason and Religion which should make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these things, because our eyes are dazzel'd with the false light and splendor of earthly felicity: But *this* assuredly is more worth than all *the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them*, to be able to possess our Souls at such a time, and
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to be at perfect Peace with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed trusting in God*: To have our Accounts made up, and Estate of our immortal Souls as well settled and secur'd, as by the assistance of God's Grace humane care and endeavour, though mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first and great care, and prefer it to all other interests whatsoever. And to this end; we should resolutely disentangle our selves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have competent liberty and leisure to attend this great concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit posture and preparation for another World: That when Sickness and Death shall come, we may not act our last part indecently and confusedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we shall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: Whereby our Souls, when they will stand most in need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and in an anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become of them for ever.

Matth. 6.
31, 33.

To conclude, This care of Religion and our Souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparifon of it we are to neglect the very necessaries of Life. So our Lord teacheth us, *Take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The Calls of God and Religion are so very pressing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever: This our Saviour signifies to us by denying the *Disciple*, whom he had call'd to follow *him*, leave to go and bury his Father, *Let the dead*, says he, *bury their dead, but do thou follow me.*

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the business of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever else we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end:* Which God grant we may all do, *in this our day*; for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

V O L. IV.

*Of the Eternity of Hell-
Torments.*

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S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N

A T

W H I T E H A L L, March 7. 16⁸⁹/₉₀.

*Of the Eternity of Hell-
Torments.*

M A T T H. 25. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

AMong all the arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of men, which are fetch'd from another World ; and from the final state of good and bad men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the latter part of this *Chapter*, he gives us of the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, namely, that at the end of the World the *Son of Man* shall come in his glory, with his *Holy Angels*, and shall sit upon the *Throne* of his *Glory* ; and all *Nations* shall be gathered before

fore him, and shall be separated into two great Companies, the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*; who shall stand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who shall pronounce sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The *Righteous* shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and the *Wicked* shall be sentenc'd to everlasting punishment. *And these, that is, the Wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The *Words* are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at first hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, and between endless Happiness and Misery: But although these *Words* be so very easy to be understood, they can never be too much consider'd by us. The Scope and design of them is, to represent to us the different Fates of good and bad men in another World, and that their Ends *there*, will be as different, as their Ways and doings have been *here* in this World: The serious consideration whereof is the greatest discouragement to Sin, and the most powerful argument in the World to
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a holy and vertuous life: Because it is an argument taken from our greatest and most lasting interest, our happiness or our misery to all Eternity: A concernment of that vast consequence, that it must be the greatest stupidity and folly in the World for any man to neglect it.

This eternal state of Rewards and Punishments in another World, our *Blessed Saviour* hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, *viz.* That good men shall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part should be true, concerning the eternal punishment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Justice of God to punish temporary Crimes with eternal Torments: Because Justice always observes a proportion between Offences and Punishments: but between temporary Sins and eternal Punishments there is no proportion. And as this seems hard to be reconcil'd with Justice, so much more with that excess of Goodness which we suppose to be in God.

And therefore they say, that though God seem to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners shall be everlastingly punish'd, yet these declarations of Scripture
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are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the essential perfections of the Divine nature.

This is the full force and strength of the Objection. And my work at this time shall be to clear, if I can, this difficult Point. And that for these two Reasons. *First*, For the vindication of the Divine Justice and Goodness: *That God may be justified in his sayings, and appear Righteous when he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, because the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmost extent is of so great moment to a good Life, and so great a discouragement to Sin: For the sting of Sin is the terrour of eternal punishment; and if men were once set free from the fear and belief of this, the most powerful restraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour to prove these two things.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

Secondly, That this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threat-

threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following Texts, *Matth. 18. 8. It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And Matth. 25. 41. Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. And here in the Text, these, that is, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment. And Mark 9. It is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our Saviour, where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched. And 2 Thes. 1. 9. speaking of them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of his Son, it is said of them, who shall be punish'd with everlasting destruction.*

I know very well that great endeavour hath been us'd to avoid the force of these Texts, by shewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited sense, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signify for a long time and till the end of the *Jewish Dispensation*. And in the *Epistle of St. Jude, verse 7th.* The Cities of *Sodom and Gomorrah* are said to be *set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is,
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of a fire that was not extinguish'd till those Cities were utterly consumed.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signify an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently proved by the instances alledg'd to this purpose. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger sense and so as necessarily to signify an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness in another World is promised to good men, and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord*. Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both, because if God had intended to have told us that the punishment of wicked men shall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than those that are used in this case, whereby to express to us a duration

ration without end : And likewise, which is almost a peremptory decision of the thing, because the duration of the punishment of wicked men is in the very same sentence express'd by the very same word which is us'd for the duration of the happiness of the righteous : As is evident from the *Text*, *These*, speaking of the wicked, *shall go away*, *εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον*, *into eternal punishment*, but the righteous, *εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, *into life eternal*. I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd ; namely, to shew that this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be answered several ways, none of which seems to me to give clear and full satisfaction to it. II.

First, It is said by some, that because sin is infinite in respect of the Object against whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deserves an infinite punishment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of subtlety than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Person against whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reason all of-

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fences against God are certainly the greatest of all other. But that crimes should hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted; and that for this plain reason; because then the evil and demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal; for the demerit of no sin can be more than infinite: And if the demerit of all sins be equal, there can then be no reason for the degrees of punishment in another World: But to deny that there are degrees of punishment there, is not only contrary to reason, but to our *Saviour's* express assertion, that some shall be *beaten with many stripes* and some with *fewer*, and that it shall be *more tolerable for some in the day of judgment* than for others. Besides, that by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against God may be said to be infinite because of its object, the least punishment that is inflicted by God may be said to be infinite because of its Author; and then all punishments from God as well as all sins against him would be equal; which is palpably absurd. So that this answer is by no means sufficient to break the force of this Objection.

Secondly, It is said by others, that if wicked men lived for ever in this World they

they would sin for ever, and therefore they deserve to be punish'd for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reason enough in it to give satisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never so long he would never repent and grow better?

Besides, that the Justice of God doth only punish the sins which men have committed in this life, and not those which they might possibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, It is said in the last place, that God hath set before men everlasting Happiness and Misery, and the sinner hath his choice. Here are two things said which seem to bid fairly towards an answer.

First, That the reward which God promiseth to our obedience is equal to the punishment which he threatens to our disobedience. But yet this I doubt will not reach the business: Because though it be not contrary to Justice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be so, to exceed in Punishments.

Secondly, It is further said, that the sinner in this case hath nothing to complain of, since he hath his own choice. This I confess is enough to silence the sinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his destruction is of himself; but yet for

all that, it does not seem so clearly to satisfy the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by these following Considerations.

First, Let it be consider'd, that the measure of Penalties with respect to Crimes is not only, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of Government ; which require such penalties as may, if it be possible, secure the observation of the Law, and deter men from the breach of it. And the reason of this is evident, because if it were once declar'd that no man should suffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the consequence of this would be that sinners would be better husbands of their time and sin so much the faster, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might satisfy for their sins by a shorter punishment.

And it would be unreasonable likewise upon another account ; because some of the greatest sins may perhaps be committed in the shortest time ; for instance,

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Murther; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of *Murther* may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being punish'd with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force.

Besides, that whoever considers how ineffectual the threatning even of eternal torments is to the greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfy'd that a less penalty than that of eternal sufferings would to the far greatest part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion

betwixt Crimes and Punishments ; but from one great end and design of Government, which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws ; and consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver ; then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal sufferings Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike ; and farther yet, that greater sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented* ; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The case then in short stands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lye at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what

what punishment upon us he pleaseth : And consequently, to secure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deterr men from the Transgression of it. And this is not esteemed unjust among men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise ; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal : But in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require : And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threat-

ned : And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among men a piece of falsehood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Niniveh*, and his peevish *Prophet* did understand the threatening to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the threatening he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was so touch'd in honour that he had rather have dyed himself than that *Niniveh* should not have been destroy'd, only to have verifi'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath confirm'd these threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain sign of the immutability of his counsel ; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impenitent Sinners
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under the Gospel ; and consequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*, when he *swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally oblige Him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent Sinners under the Gospel, that *they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God*. And this is very truly reason'd, so far as the threatning extends ; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be stretch'd, doth not seem to reach any further than to the exclusion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven and their falling finally short of the Rest and Happiness of the Righteous : Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion ascrib'd to *Origen* that the Devils and wicked men shall all be saved at last ; God having *sworn in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest*.

But then, as to the eternal misery and punishment threatned to wicked men in the other World, though it be not necessarily comprehended in this Oath that *they shall not enter into his Rest* : yet we are to consider, that both the tenour of the *Sentence* which our Blessed *Saviour* hath assur'd us will be pass'd upon them

at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*; and likewise this Declaration in the Text, that *the Wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment*, though they do not restrain God from doing what he pleases, yet they cut off from the Sinner all reasonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For since the great Judge of the World hath made so plain and express a Declaration, and will certainly pass such a Sentence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in the world for the Sinner to entertain any hope of escaping it, and to venture his soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon this Argument, that seems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *destruction* and *perishing*, whereby the punishment of wicked men in the other World is most frequently express'd in *Scripture*, do most properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reasonably be so understood in the matter of which we are now speaking.

To this I answer, that these words, and those which answer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, used to signify a state
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of great misery and suffering, without the utter extinction of the miserable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* said to bring *destruction* upon a Nation when he sends great Judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in most Languages, than by *perishing* to express a person's being undone and made very miserable. As in that known passage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the Roman Senate, * *Let all the Gods and Goddeses, saith he, destroy me worse than at this very time I feel my self to perish, &c.* in which Saying, the words, *destroy* and *perish*, are both of them us'd to express the miserable anguish and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

* *Ita me
Dij Deaq;
omnes pejus
perdant
quam hodie
perire me
sentio, &c.*

And as for the word *Death*; a state of misery which is as bad or worse than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: And for this reason the punishment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the *Revelation* so frequently and fitly call'd *the second death*. And *the Lake of fire*, into which the wicked *shall be cast* to be tormented in it, is expressly call'd *the second death*.

Rev. 20:

But besides this, they that argue from ¹⁴ the

the force of these words, that the punishment of wicked men in the other world shall be nothing else but an utter end of their Being, do necessarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

First, That hereby they exclude all positive punishment and torment of Sinners. For if *the second death*, and to be *destroy'd*, and to *perish*, signify nothing else but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful *Sentence* which shall be pass'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture*, which doth so often describe the punishment of wicked men in Hell by positive torments: And particularly our Blessed *Saviour*, describing the lamentable state of the damned in Hell, expressly says that *there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; which cannot be, if *Annihilation* be all the meaning and effect of the *Sentence* of the Great Day.

Secondly, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the punishment of Sinners in the other World, then the punishment of all Sinners must
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of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this also is most directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already shewn.

I know very well that some who are of this Opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they must not argue this from the force of the Words before mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that *Annihilation* is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next Life ; And if that be not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in *Scripture* they can find the least ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked men shall at last end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot see what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

Thirdly, We may consider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not punish-

punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punish'd, but that they may not sin, and so may escape the punishment threaten'd. And therefore the higher the threatning runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it ; because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

Fourthly, Let it be consider'd likewise, that when it is so very plain that God hath threatned eternal misery to impenitent Sinners , all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earnest and will execute these threatnings upon them, if they will obstinately stand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reason we ought so to demean our selves , and so to perswade others , as knowing the terrour of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and last place, That if we suppose that God did intend that his threatnings should have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the same Revelation which declares these threatnings any
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intimation should be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his threatnings: Because a threatening hath quite lost its force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And consequently, it would be a very impious design to go about to teach or perswade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that misery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and You and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not so, as sawcily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and express threatening of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we still go on to *treasure up to our selves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why
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we should be very sollicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that He, *who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that He will certainly so manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, *as to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged*. For, notwithstanding his Threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may rest assur'd, that he will *judge the world in righteousness*; and if it be any-wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which He knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable for ever, that He will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Punishment which he could not justly execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it: And always

ways to remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's Threatnings; and that nothing will more justify the infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This, I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly severe; that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This God heartily desires we would do; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*. So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this misery upon us. And both these, I am sure, are arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more, than to warn us of this misery; and earnestly to persuade us to prevent it; and to threaten us so very terribly, on purpose to deter us from so great a danger?

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And if this will not prevail with us, but we will still go on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long suffering, and forbearance*; what in reason remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to consume us*? And what almost can Justice, or even Goodness it self do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no persuasion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the *Apostle* says, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death*; yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us Life and Death, eternal Happiness and Misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune: And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this Misery, *Wo unto us! for we have rewarded evil to our selves.*

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in
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our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Punishment the just God hath threatened to the Workers of Iniquity : and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. *These, that is, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal.*

Here are *Life* and *Death*, Happiness and Misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life ; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences of it : But an eternal Life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleasant and happy ; and a perpetual Death, which will for ever torment us , but never make an end of us.

These God propounds to our choice : And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our sins, and to reform our lives, what will ? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the understanding of Man, than *everlasting Punishment*, and *Life eternal* ; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most

intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now, considering in what terms the Threatnings of the Gospel are express'd, we have all the reason in the world to believe that the Punishment of Sinners in another world will be everlasting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find by experience how it is: And if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being discharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty consolation, that they shall be miserable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment
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of things? No consideration and care of themselves, no concernment for their own lasting Interest and Happiness?

Origen, I know not for what good reason, is said to have been of opinion, That the punishment of Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thousand years; and that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly persuade myself, that so wise and learned a man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise term of a thousand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thousand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatned in the Gospel: I say, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiser to take care to avoid it, than to dispute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, especially if we put it at the worst, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all possible means to be provided against: So terrible, so intolerable is the
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thought, yea the very least suspicion of being miserable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask You, as *St. Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may answer for you my self as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them these things are clearly revealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a solemn profession every day.

And yet when we consider how most men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour* and our *Judge*, *That the wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our *Actions*, we must either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we must change our *Lives*.

Let us then *consider, and shew our selves men.* And if we do so, can any man to please himself for a little while be contented to be punished for ever; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next World? Sure-

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet ; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of Sin and Vice : Because they bid us so infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short Pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the Scales against any Pleasure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or can threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly ; when *we know the terrors of the Lord*, and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loss of our immortal Souls, and by *suffering the vengeance of eternal Fire* ?

What is it then that can give men the *Heart and Courage* ; but I recall that Word, because it is not true *Courage*, but *fool hardiness*, thus to outbrave the Judg-

ment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable Eternity? How is it possible that men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet hour, whilst so great a danger hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and just sense of this danger, we cannot fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to escape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be Happy or Miserable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate and measure things as they appear now to our sensual and deluded and deprav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the last issue and consequence of them: Let us often think of these things, and consider well with our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill and possess our minds, when we shall stand trembling before our *Judge*, in a fearful expectation of that terrible *Sentence* which is just ready to be pronounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounc'd to be executed upon us: When we shall have a full and clear sight of the unspeakable
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Happiness, and of the horrible and astonishing Miseries of another World: When there shall be no longer any Veil of Flesh and Sense to interpose between them and us, and to hide these things from our eyes: And, in a word, when Heaven with all the Glories of it, shall be open to our view; and, as the expression is in *Job*, *Hell shall be naked before us, and Destruction shall have no covering.*

How shall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of those things which we will not now be persuaded to believe? And how shall we then wish, that we had believed *the terrors of the Lord*; and instead of quarrelling with the Principles of Religion, and calling them into question, we had lived under the constant sense and awe of them?

Blessed be God, that there is yet *hope concerning us*, and that we may yet *flee from the wrath to come*; and that the Miseries of Eternity may yet be prevented in Time: And that for this very end and purpose, our most Gracious and Merciful God hath so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a desire to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

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Wisd. of Solomon, ch. 1. ver. 12, 13, 16. I will conclude all with the Counsel of the *Wise Man*; *Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your selves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the Living: But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themselves.* Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom, with Thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

Success

V O L. IV.

*Success not always answerable
to the probability of Second Causes.*

A

FAST - SERMON

Preached before the

House of COMMONS,

ON

Wednesday, April the 16th. 1690.

Jovis 17. die April. 1690.

Ordered,

THat the Thanks of this House
be given to Dr. *Tillotson*,
Dean of *St. Pauls*, for the Sermon
Preached before this House Yesterday;
And that he be desired to
Print the same; And that Sir *Ed-
mund Jennings* do acquaint him there-
with.

Paul Jodrell,
Cler. Dom. Com.

*Success not always answerable to
the probability of Second Causes.*

Ecclesiastes IX. 11.

*I returned, and saw under the sun, that
the race is not to the swift, nor the
battel to the strong, nor yet bread to
the wise, nor yet riches to men of un-
derstanding, nor yet favour to men of
skill; but time and chance happeneth
to them all.*

NEXT to the acknowledgment of
God's Being, nothing is more es-
sential to Religion, than the Belief of
his Providence, and a constant depen-
dence upon him, as the great Governor
of the World, and the wise disposer of
all the affairs and concernments of the
children of men: And nothing can be a
greater argument of Providence, than
that there is such an order of Causes laid
in Nature, that in ordinary course every
thing does usually attain its end; and
yet

yet that there is such a mixture of Contingency, as that now and then, we cannot tell how nor why, the most likely causes do deceive us, and fail of producing their usual effects.

For if there be a God and a Providence, it is reasonable that things should be thus: Because a Providence does suppose all things to have been at first wisely fram'd, and with a fitness to attain their end; but yet it does also suppose that God hath reserved to himself a power and liberty to interpose, and to cross as he pleases, the usual course of things; to awaken men to the consideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to ascribe those things to his wise disposal, which, if we never saw any change, we should be apt to impute to blind necessity. And therefore the *Wise-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had observed things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Causes, yet sometimes they fall out quite otherwise, *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

The connexion of which Words, with
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the foregoing Discourse, is briefly this. Among many other Observations which the *Wise Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the mistakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verse* before it, of two Extremes of human Life: Some, because of the uncertainty of all worldly things, cast off all care and diligence, and neglect the use of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are disappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely so much upon their own skill and industry, as to promise success to themselves in all their undertakings; and presume so much upon second Causes, as if no consideration at all were to be had of the First.

The *Wise Preacher* reproves both these extremes, and shews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of those who sit still, and will use no care and endeavour, because it may all happen to be disappointed, and to fail of Success: Not considering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the business, yet there is nothing to be done with-

without them, in the ordinary course of things ; and that, in the order of Second Causes, these are the most likely and effectual means to any end : And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counsels men, whatever they propose to themselves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the use of proper means for the attainment of it ; in the *Verse* immediately before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he observes also, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand ; that they who manage their affairs with great wisdom and industry, are apt to presume and reckon upon the certain success of them, without taking into consideration that which in all human affairs is most considerable, the favour and blessing of that almighty and wise Providence which rules the World ; *I returned*, says he, *and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

I returned and saw, that is, having consider'd on the one hand the folly of sloth and carelessness, I turned mine eyes the other way, and saw as great an error on the other hand ; in mens presuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence

vidence of God. For I have found, says *Solomon*, by manifold observation, That the success of things does not always answer the probability of second causes and means. So that the sum of the *Preacher's* advice is this: When thou propoudest any end to thy self, be diligent and vigorous in the use of means; and when thou hast done all, look above and beyond these to a Superior Cause which overrules, and steers, and stops as he pleases, all the motions and activity of second Causes: And be not confident that all things are ever so wisely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of success. For the Providence of God doth many times step in to divert the most probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: And whenever he pleaseth to do so, the most strong and likely means do fall lame, or stumble, or by some accident or other come short of their end.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that is, here below, in this inferior World.

That the race is not to the swift: This the *Chaldee Paraphrast* does understand with relation to warlike affairs, *I beheld*, says he, *and saw, that they who are swift as eagles do not always escape in the day of battle*. But I chuse rather to understand the

Words in their more obvious sense, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is swiftest from winning it.

Nor the battel to the strong ; That is, victory and success in war do not always attend the greatest force and preparations, nor doth that side which in humane estimation is strongest always prevail and get the better.

Nor yet bread to the wise ; Neque doctorum panem esse, so some render the Words, that learned men are not always secured against poverty and want.

Nor yet riches to men of understanding, for so some *Interpreters* translate the Words, *Neque industriis divitias esse,* that those who take most pains do not always get the greatest estates.

Nor yet favour to men of skill ; that is, to those who understand men and business, and how to apply themselves dextrously to the inclinations and interests of Princes and Great men. Others interpret these Words more generally, *Neque peritorum artificum esse gratiam,* that those who excel most in their several Arts and Professions do not always meet with suitable encouragement : But because the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is
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so frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former sense seems to be more easy and natural.

But time and chance happeneth to them all; that is, saith *Aben Ezra*, there is a secret Providence of God which sometimes presents men with unexpected opportunities, and interposeth accidents which no human wisdom could foresee: Which gives success to very unlikely means; and defeats the swift, and the strong, and the learned, and the industrious, and them that are best vers'd in men and business, of their several ends and designs.

It sometimes happens, that he that is *swiftest*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by some other unlucky accident may lose the Race.

It sometimes falls out, that a much smaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a pass; by a stratagem, or by a sudden surprise, or by some other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in comparison, by favour, or friends, or by some happy chance of setting out to the best advantage the little learning he has, before one that hath less, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the same time,

the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to starve.

And that men of no great parts and industry may stumble into an estate, and by some casual hit in Trade, may attain such a Fortune, as the man that hath toild and drudg'd all his life shall never be able to reach.

And *Lastly*, that a man of no great ambition or design may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, some soft and lucky season of address, may slide into his Prince's favour, and all on the sudden be hoisted up to that degree of dignity and esteem, as the designing Man who hath been laying trains to blow up his Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out and to skrew himself in, shall never be able to attain.

The Words thus explain'd contain this general Proposition, which shall be the subject of my following Discourse.

That in human affairs the most likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event constantly answer the probability of second causes; but there is a secret Providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most hopeful and probable designs.

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In the handling of this Proposition I shall do these three things.

First, I shall confirm and illustrate the truth of it, by an Induction of the particulars which are instanc'd in, here in the *Text*.

Secondly, I shall give some reason and account of this, why the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs.

Thirdly, I shall draw some inferences from the whole, suitable to the occasion of this Day. In all which I shall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

First, For the confirmation and illustration of this Proposition, *That the most likely means do not always attain their end; but there is a secret Providence which overrules and governs all events, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most probable and hopeful designs.* This is the general Conclusion which *Solomon* proves by this Induction of particulars in the *Text*. And he instanceth in the most probable means for the compassing of the several ends which most men in this World propose to themselves. And the great darlings of mankind are *Victory, Riches, and Honour*: I do not mention *Pleasure*, because that seems rather to result from the use

and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man design *Victory*, what more probable means to overcome in a Race than swiftness? What more likely to prevail in War than strength? If a man aim at Riches, what more proper to raise an Estate than understanding and industry? If a man aspire to Honour, what more likely to prefer him to the King's favour and service than dexterity and skill in business? And yet experience shews that these means, as probable as they seem to be, are not always successful for the accomplishment of their several ends.

Or else we may suppose that *Solomon* by these Instances did intend to represent the chief engines and instruments of humane designs and actions. Now there are *five* things more especially, which do eminently qualify a man for any undertaking; expedition and quickness of dispatch; strength and force; providence and forecast; diligence and industry; knowledge, and insight into men and business: And some think that *Solomon* did intend to represent these several qualities by the several instances in the *Text*. *The Race is not to the swift*, that is, men of the greatest expedition and dispatch do not always succeed: For we see that men do

do sometimes out-run business, and make haste to be undone. *Nor the battel to the strong*, that is, neither does force and strength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wise*; which some understand of the provident care and pains of the Husbandman, whose harvest is not always answerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet riches to men of understanding*, or industry; that is, neither is diligence in business always crown'd with success. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither have they that have the greatest dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to rise. And if we take the words in this sense, the thing will come much to one: But I rather approve the first interpretation, as being less forc'd and nearer to the *Letter*.

So that the force of *Solomon's* reasoning is this. If the swiftest do not always win the race; nor the strongest always overcome in War: If knowledge and learning do not always secure men from want; nor industry always make men rich; nor political skill always raise men to high place; nor any other means, that can be instanced in as most probable, do constantly and infallibly succeed: then it must be acknowledg'd that there is some

other Cause which mingles it self with humane affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleases, defeat the most likely, and bring to pass the most improbable designs: And what else can that be imagin'd to be, but the secret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God? when we can find no other, we are very unreasonable if we will not admit this to be the Cause of such extraordinary events, but will obstinately impute that to blind Necessity or Chance which hath such plain characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wisdom.

I might be large upon every one of these Instances in the *Text*, and illustrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Histories. But I shall briefly pass over all of them, but the *second, the battel is not to the strong.*

The race is not to the swift. If we understand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may snatch Victory from the swiftest runner. If we understand it, as the *Chaldee Paraphrase* does, with relation to War, that the swiftest does not always overcome or escape in the day of Battel; of this *Asahel* is an eminent Instance, who though he was, as
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the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not escape the spear of *Abner*. It seems that among the *Ancients*, swiftness was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warriour, both because it serves for a sudden assault and onset, and likewise for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore *David*; in his Poetical *Lamentation* over those two great Captains, *Saul* and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs; *They were*, says he, *swifter than Eagles, stronger than Lyons*: And the constant Character which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his principal *Heroes*, is, that *he was swift of foot*: The Poet feigns of him, that by some charm or gift of the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his body except his heel: And *that* was the part to which he trusted; and in *that* he received his mortal wound: The wise Poet hereby instructing us, that many times our greatest danger lies there, where we place our chief confidence and safety.

Nor yet bread to the wise, or to the learned. The poverty of *Poets* is Proverbial; and there are frequent instances in History of eminently learned persons that have been reduced to great straits and necessities.

Nor

Nor yet riches to men of understanding :
By which, whether we understand men of great parts, or of great diligence and industry ; it is obvious to every man's observation, that an ordinary capacity and understanding does usually lie more level to the business of a common Trade and Profession, than more refin'd and elevated parts ; which lie rather for speculation than practice, and are better fitted for the pleasure and ornament of conversation, than for the toil and drudgery of business : As a fine Razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull Hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of timber. And even when Parts and Industry meet together, they are many times less successful in the raising of a great Estate, than men of much lower and slower understandings : because these are apt to admire riches, which is a great spur to industry ; and because they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one business, from which their thoughts never straggle into vain and useless enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs ; all which being foreign to their business they leave to those who are, as they are wont to say of them in scorn, more curious, and too wise to be rich.

Nor

Nor yet favour to men of skill. All History is full of Instances of the casual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others, who have made it their serious study and business, have fallen short of it. I could give a famous Example in this kind, of the manifold and manifest disappointment of a whole Order of men: the slyest and most subtile, *in their generation, of all the children of this World*; the most politically instituted, and the best studied and skill'd in the tempers and interests of men; the most pragmatical, and cunning to insinuate themselves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Families: and who, by long experience, and an universal intelligence, and communicated observations, have reduced humane affairs, at least as they think, to a certain Art and Method, and to the most steady Rules that such contingent things are capable of: I believe you all guess before-hand whom I mean, even the *honest Jesuits*: And yet these men of so much art and skill have met with as many checks and disappointments, as any sort of men ever did: They have been discountenanc'd by almost all Princes and States, and, one time or other, banish'd out of most of the Courts and Countries
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of *Europe*. And it is no small argument of the Divine Providence, that so much cunning hath met with so little countenance and success; and hath been so often, so grossly infatuated, and their *counsels turn'd into foolishness*.

But I promis'd only to mention these, and to insist upon the second Instance in the *Text*, *I return'd, and saw under the Sun, that the battel is not to the strong, to the Gibborim, the Gyants*, for so the *Hebrew* word signifies; in which *Solomon* might possibly have respect to the history of the *Israelites* subduing the *Canaanites*, a People of great strength and stature, among whom were the *Gyants, the sons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliath*: But however that be, the *Scripture* is full of Examples to this purpose; that when the Providence of God is pleased to interpose in favour of any side, it becomes victorious; according to the saying of King *Asa* in his prayer to God, *it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with those that have no power*.

2 Chron.
14. 11.

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles: Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his

his Host in the Red Sea; and the Stars fighting in their courses against *Sisera*; by which Poetical expression I suppose is meant *Sisera's* being remarkably defeated by a visible hand from Heaven: And such was the destruction of the proud King of *Assyria's* Army by an *Angel*, who slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more humane ways; by striking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and sometimes by putting extraordinary spirits and courage into the weaker side, so that *an hundred shall chase a thousand, and a thousand shall put ten thousand to flight.*

This made *David* so frequently to acknowledge the Providence of God, especially in the affairs of War. *There is no* Ps. 33. 16. *King saved by the multitude of an Host, neither is a mighty man delivered by much strength.* And again, *I will not trust in my* Psal. 44 6. *bow, neither shall my sword save me.* And *Solomon* confirms the same observation, *There is no wisdom, says he, nor understand-* Prov. 21. *ing, nor counsel against the Lord. The horse* 30, 31. *is prepared against the day of battel, but safety, or, as some Translations render it Victory, is of the Lord. Gideon, by a very*
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odd stratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers*, defeated a very numerous Army, only with three hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer*, by climbing up a Rock, and coming suddenly on the back of the *Philistines* Camp, struck them with such a terror as put their whole Army to flight. King *Asa*, with a much inferior number, defeated that huge *Ethiopian* Army which consisted of a *Million*. And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army overthrown, almost by a handful of *Grecians*? And, to come nearer our selves, how was that formidable Fleet of the *Spaniards*, which they presumptuously called *invincible*, shatter'd and broken in pieces, chiefly by the Winds and the Sea? So many accidents are there, especially in War, whereby the Divine Providence doth sometimes interpose and give Victory to the weaker side.

And this hath been so apparent in all Ages, that even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the affairs of War, a special interposition of *Fortune*; by which the wiser among them did understand the *Divine Providence*. *Plutarch*, speaking of the *Romans*, says, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very same with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the Text, did lay the foundation

dation of their Greatness, by which he ascribes their success to a remarkable Providence of God concurring with several happy Opportunities.

And *Livy*, their great Historian, hath this remarkable Observation, That in all human affairs, especially in matters of War, Fortune hath a mighty stroke. And again, No where, says he, is the event less answerable to expectation than in War; and therefore nothing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not turn the Scales in a great matter. And *Cæsar* himself, who was perhaps the most skilful and prosperous Warriour that ever was, makes the same acknowledgment; As in all other things, says he, so particularly in War, Fortune hath a huge sway. And *Plutarch* observes, That there was no Temple at Rome dedicated to *Wisdom* or *Valour*, but a most magnificent and stately one to *Fortune*; signifying hereby, that they did ascribe their success infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now, in the

Second place, to give some reason and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth sometimes thus interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs

II.

signs of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his Providence, and of their dependance upon Him, and subordination to Him ; and that He is the great Governor of the World, and *rules in the Kingdoms of men* ; and that *all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to Him*, and the power of Second Causes inconsiderable: That *He doth according to his will, in the Armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou.*

God hath so order'd things, in the administration of the affairs of the World, as to encourage the use of means ; and yet so, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and success of them : To encourage Industry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural course, and to fall out according to the power and probability of second Causes.

But then, lest men should cast off Religion, and *deny the God that is above* ; lest they should *trust in their sword and their bow, and say, the Lord hath not done this* ; lest men should look upon themselves as the Creators and framers of their own fortune, and when they do but a little outstrip others in wisdom or power, in
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the skill and conduct of humane affairs, they should grow proud and presumptuous, God is pleas'd sometimes more remarkably to interpose, *to hide pride from man*, as the expression is in *Job*; to check the haughtiness and insolence of mens spirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modesty and humility; to make us to know *that we are but men*, and that the reins of the World are not in our hands, but that there is *One* above who sways and governs all things here below.

And indeed if we should suppose, in the first frame of things which we call *Nature*, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a constant course, according to the power and force of second Causes, without any interposition of Providence to stop, or alter that course, upon any occasion: In this case, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but especially of Prayer to God would be quite taken away: Upon this Supposition, it would be the vainest thing in the World to pray to God for the good success of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a settled and establish'd

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bliss'd course; then instead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the best provision and preparation we can for the effecting of what we desire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counsel and consideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently suppose, that the Providence of God does frequently interpose, to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in human probability they seem'd to tend.

So that it is every whit as necessary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that He governs the World, and does when He pleases interpose in the affairs of it, as that he made it at first. I come now in the

III. *Third* and last place, to make some Inferences suitable to the Occasion of this Day, from what hath been said upon this Argument: And they shall be these.

First, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time spent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to Him for his blessing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is still
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in God's hand, and rests upon the disposal of his Providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themselves so carelessly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we see too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is spent in Devotion as lost from their business.

If men would but take a view of what hath happen'd to them in the course of a long Life, I believe most of us would see reason to acknowledge, that our prosperity and success in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities; upon undesign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecast and conduct.

And if this were well consider'd by us, we should not methinks be so apt to leave God out of our counsels and undertakings, as if he were a mere Name and Cypher in the World. It is, I am sure, the advice of one that was much wiser and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean, *Solomon*, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and Prov. 3. lean not to thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths: Be not wise in thine own eyes,*

eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.

There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, That to live under a constant sense and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to seek his favour and blessing upon all our designs, being fearful to offend Him and careful to please Him, is a much nearer and surer way to success, than our own best Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore at such a time, more especially, when we are going to War, or engaged in it, we should break off our sins by repentance and the sincere resolution of a better course: We should earnestly implore the blessing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our Cause be just, but likewise that there be *no wicked thing* amongst us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accursed thing*, that may provoke Him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to the Jews, *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemy, then keep thy self from every wicked thing; then,* that is, more especially at such a time.

Deut. 23.
9.

And this is a necessary Caution, not only to those who are personally engaged
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in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the day of Battel, or if God shall suffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with Him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cause, but of a good Conscience, void of offence towards God and men.

But this Caution likewise concerns those, who are interested in the success and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Estates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Consciences; which are now every whit as much at stake, as our Civil interests and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of these, we should be very careful *to keep our selves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us may not for our sins, and for our sakes, turn their backs in the day of battel, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

Secondly, From hence we may likewise learn, so to use the means as still to depend upon God; who can, as he pleases, bless the Counsels and endeavours of Men, or blast them and make them of

none effect. For as God hath promised nothing but to a wise and diligent use of means, so all our prudence, and industry, and most careful preparations may miscarry, if He do not favour our design: For without Him nothing is wise, nothing is strong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end.

We should indeed use the means as vigorously, as if God did nothing; and when we have done so, we should depend upon God for the success of those means, as if we our selves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and blessing: For when all is done, we are only safe under his Protection, and sure of success from his Blessing.

For whatever vain and *foolish* men may say in their hearts, *There is, There is a God*, that made the World, and administers the affairs of it with great Wisdom and Goodness; else how came any of us into Being, or what do we here? Did we not most assuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and super-intends human affairs; the first wish of a Wise man would be, to steal out of Being, if he could; and that the same Chance or Necessity that brought him into the World, would take the first
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opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to present, and great, and certain Evils; and to have no security against the continuance of them, or the return of the same or worse Evils; nor to have any assurance of a better and more durable state of rest and happiness hereafter, is in truth so very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any consideration in the World that is of force and power enough to support the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiser, and better, and more powerful than our selves, and that keeps things from running into endless confusion and disorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly consider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we suffer upon his account, I do not see what reason any man could have to take any comfort and joy in *Being*, or to wish the continuance of it for one moment.

Thirdly and lastly, The Consideration of what hath been said upon this Argument, should keep us from being too sanguine and confident of the most likely designs and undertakings; because these do not always answer the probability of

second Causes and Means; and never less, than when we do with the greatest confidence rely upon them; when we promise most to our selves from them, then are they most likely to deceive us: They are, as the *Prophet* compares them, like a *broken reed*, which a man may walk with in his hand, whilst he lays no great stress upon it; but if he trust to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even *pierce him through*.

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the most hopeful and likely condition to succeed and do well, than to shut God and his Providence out of our counsels and consideration. When we pass God by, and take no notice of Him, but will rely upon our own wisdom and strength, we provoke him to leave us *in the hands of our own counsel*, and to let us see what weak and foolish Creatures we are: And a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he clasps his arms closest about himself: Besides, that God loves to resist the self-confident and presumptuous, and to *scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts*.

And as in all our concernments we ought to have a great regard to God, the

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Supreme disposer of all things, and earnestly to seek his favour and blessing upon all our undertakings, so more especially in the affairs of War; in which the Providence of God is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to interpose and interest it self: And there is great reason to think he does so; because all War is, as it were, an Appeal to God, and a reference of those Causes to the decision of his Providence, which through the pride, and injustice, and perverse passions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to shew himself, and in an eminent manner to take part with Right and Justice against those *mighty Oppressors of the Earth*, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this case, the Providence of God is sometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to *One* that vainly gives out himself *not unequal to the whole World*; by very weak and contemptible means; and, as *the Apostle* elegantly expresseth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are*: And to say to *Him*, as God once did to the proud King of *Assyria*: *Whom hast thou*
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214 Success not always answerable to

Isa. 37. 23, reproached and blasphemed, and against whom
26, 27, 28, hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up
29, 32. thine eyes on high? even against the Holy
one of Israel. Hast thou not heard long ago,
that I have done it; and of ancient times
that I have formed it? Now have I brought
it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste
defenced Cities into ruinous heaps: There-
fore their Inhabitants were of small power,
they were dismayed and confounded, &c. But
I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy
coming in, and thy rage against me: Be-
cause thy rage against me, and thy tumult is
come up into mine ears, therefore will I put
my hook into thy nose, and my bridle into
thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way
by which thou camest. — The zeal of the
Lord of Hosts shall do this.

But more especially, in vindication of
his oppressed Truth and Religion, and in
the great and signal Deliverances of his
Church and People, God is wont to take
the conduct of affairs into his own hands,
and not to proceed by humane rules and
measures: He then bids second Causes to
stand by, that *his own Arm may be seen*, and
his Salvation may appear: He raiseth the
spirits of men above their natural pitch,
and giveth power to the faint, and to them
that have no might he increaseth strength,
as the Prophet expresseth it. Thus

Thus hath the Providence of God very visibly appear'd in our late Deliverance; in such a manner, as I know not whether He ever did for any other Nation, except the People of *Israel*, when He delivered them from the House of Bondage by so mighty a hand and so outstretched an arm: And yet too many among us, I speak it this day to our shame, do not seem to have the least sense of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was so visible in it; but like the Children of *Israel* when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are full of *murmurings* and discontent against God the Author, and his Servant the happy Instrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the Prophet says of that People, may I fear be too justly apply'd to us, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the Land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord: Lord, When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed: And I hope I may add that which follows in the next verse, Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works for us. What God hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earnest that He will*

Isa. 26.
10, 11.

will carry it on to a perfect peace and settlement; and this, notwithstanding our high provocations and horrible ingratitude to *the God of our Life, and of our Salvation.*

And when ever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpose in humane affairs, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battel to the strong*: For which reason *their Majesties*, in their great Piety and Wisdom, and from a just sense of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the Kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to set apart this *Day* for solemn repentance and humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, and which are of all other our greatest and most dangerous Enemies, may not *separate between God and us*, and *hinder good things from us*, and cover us with confusion in the day of our danger and distress: And likewise, earnestly to implore the favour and blessing of Almighty God upon *their Majesties* Forces and Preparations by Sea and Land: And more particularly, for the preservation of *his Majesties* sacred Person, upon whom so much depends, and who is contented again to hazard Himself to save us.

To

To conclude; There is no such way to engage the Providence of God for us, as by real Repentance and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our several Places from the highest to the lowest, by the provision of wise and effectual Laws for the discountenancing and suppressing of Profaneness and Vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good Example; to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nation: For without this, whatever we may think of the firmness of our present settlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with Almighty God, upon whose favour depends the prosperity and stability of the present and future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to stir up your charity towards the poor; which is likewise a great part of the Duty of this Day, and which ought always to accompany our Prayers and Fastings: *Thy Prayers and thine Alms*, saith the *Angel* to *Cornelius*, *are come up before God*: And therefore if we desire that our Prayers should reach Heaven, and receive a gracious answer from God, we must send up our Alms along with them.

And

Isa. 58. 5,
6, &c.

And instead of all other arguments to this purpose, I shall only recite to you the plain and perswasive words of God Himself, in which He declares what kind of Fast is acceptable to Him: *Is it such a Fast as I have chosen? a Day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable Day to the Lord? Is not this the Fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke: Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thine house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily; thy righteousness, or thine Alms, shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward: Then shalt thou call, and I will answer thee; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am.*

Now to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: To God, even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead,

dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth: Unto Him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father: To Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen.

And the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the
 earth: Who then, who hath loved us, and
 washed us from our filth in his own blood, and
 paid us as Kings and Priests unto God
 by his blood: To Him be glory and do-
 minion, for ever and ever, Amen.

And thus, I have, that brought a
 gain for the dead, and this I hope, that
 you will be of the flock, though the
 blood of the living is necessary, and
 the blood of the dead is necessary to his life.
 Now, you see, that I have well pleased in
 the blood of the living, to be of the flock.
 Amen.

V O L. IV.

*The way to prevent the Ruin
of a Sinful People.*

A

FAST - SERMON

Preached before the

L O R D - M A Y O R, &c.

O N

Wednesday, June the 18th. 1690.

Q

Pilkington Mayor,

*Mercurii xviii. Junii 1690. Annoq;
Regis & Reginae Willelmi & Mariae,
Angliae, &c. Secundo.*

THis Court doth desire Dr. Til-
lotson, Dean of St. Pauls, to
Print his Sermon preach'd before
the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, and
Citizens of London, at St. Mary-le-
Bow.

Wagstaffe.

To the Right Honourable

Sir Thomas Pilkington,

Lord-Mayor of the City of *London:*

A N D T H E

Court of Aldermen.

M Y L O R D,

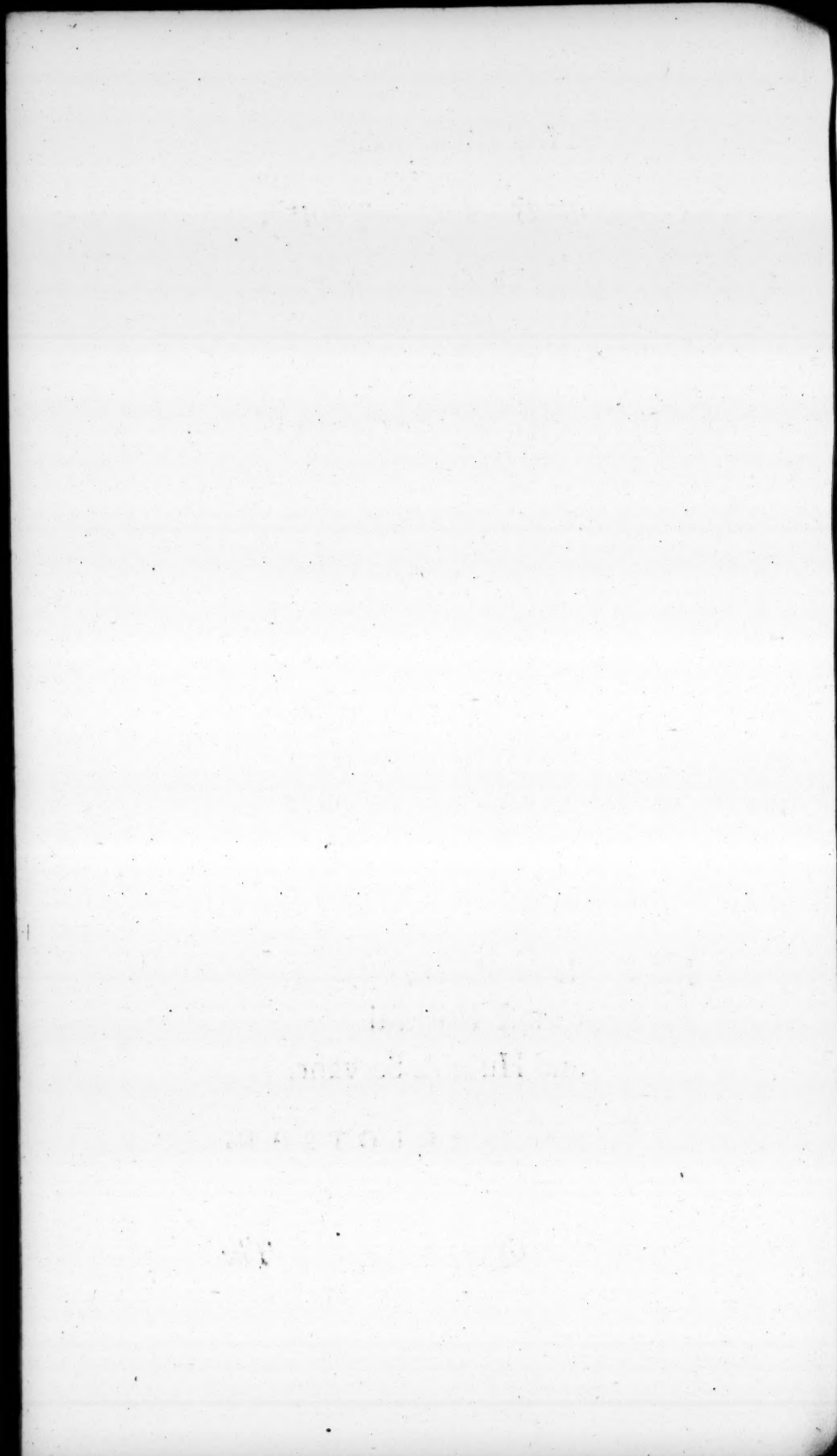
IN Obedience to Your Commands, I have publish'd this Sermon lately preach'd before You, and do now humbly present you with it; heartily wishing it may have that good effect for the reformation of our Lives, and reconciliation of our unhappy Differences, which was sincerely intended by,

M Y L O R D,

Your most Faithful

and Humble Servant,

J O H N T I L L O T S O N.



*The way to prevent the Ruin
of a Sinful People.*

Jeremiah VI. 8.

*Be thou instructed O Jerusalem, lest my
soul depart from thee, lest I make thee
desolate, a land not inhabited.*

THese Words are a merciful warning
from God to the People of *Israel*
by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, the last Prophet
that God sent to them before their Capti-
vity in *Babylon*.

The time of his Prophecy was of a long
continuance, above the space of forty
years, *viz.* from the thirteenth year of
King *Josiah*, to the eleventh year of King
Zedekiah, the year in which *Jerusalem*
was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of
Babylon.

This I observe, to shew the great pati-
ence of God to a sinful Nation. And this
is much the same space of time that God
gave warning by our Blessed Saviour and

his *Apostles* to the same People of the *Jews* concerning their final Destruction. For it was about forty years after the Prediction of our Saviour concerning it, just before his Death, that the terrible Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Jewish* Nation was executed upon them by the *Romans*, or rather chiefly by themselves; as I shall presently shew. Of which dreadful Desolation, the first taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and their Captivity into *Babylon* was a kind of Type and Forerunner. For, as *Josephus* observes, the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus Vespasian* did happen in the very same Month, and on the very same Day of the Month in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, viz. upon our *tenth of August*.

And it is not unworthy of our observation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold some sort of proportion with the extent of his Judgments. Before the universal Deluge which destroyed the whole World, *Noah* and his Family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of *Noah*, for the space of an *hundred and twenty years*. Before the destruction of a particular Nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the *Jews*, his time of warning is *forty years*.
And

And before the destruction of a particular City, if we may conclude any thing from the single example of *Niniveh*, the time of God's warning is yet much shorter, the space of *forty days*.

And now to what end doth God exercise so much patience and threaten so long beforehand, but that by the terror of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his Prophet threatens ruin and destruction to the People of *Israel*, he earnestly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might escape the ruin that was denounced against them: This being a condition perpetually implied in the denunciation of publick judgments, that if a People repent of the evil of their doings God also will repent of the evil which he said he would do unto them, as he expressly declares *chap. 18. vers. 7, 8. At what instant I speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that Nation against whom I have pronounc'd turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And here in the Text, after God had threaten'd destruction to *Jerusalem*, be-

cause of the overflowing of all manner of wickedness and oppression in the midst of her, he gives her a merciful warning to prevent this ruin and desolation by repentance, *vers. 6, 7. Thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem; this is a City to be visited, she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out waters, so she casteth out her wickedness. Before me continually is grief and wounds.* And yet when he had pronounced this fearful Sentence upon her, he tells her that all this misery and desolation might yet be prevented, if they would but hearken to the counsel of God, and be instructed by him concerning the things of their peace: For so it follows in the next words, *Be thou instructed O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited. Be thou instructed O Jerusalem,* that is, do but now at last take that counsel and warning which hath so often, and so long, been tender'd to thee by my servant the Prophet, who hath now for the space of forty years continually, and that with great earnestness and importunity, been warning thee of this danger and calling thee to repentance and a better mind.

Lest

Lest my soul depart from thee. In the Hebrew it is, *Lest my soul be loosened and disjointed from thee*, as it is in the margin of your Bibles ; hereby signifying, in the most emphatical manner, the wonderful affection and kindness which God had for his People, and how strongly his soul was link'd to them, and how loth he was to withdraw his love from them ; it was like the tearing off of a limb, or the plucking of a joint in sunder ; so unwilling is God to come to extremity ; so hardly is he brought to resolve upon the ruin even of a sinful Nation : How much rather would he, that they would be instructed and receive correction, and hearken to the things of their peace ? But if they will not be persuaded, if no warning will work upon them, *his spirit will not always strive with them* ; but *his soul* will at last, though with great unwillingness and reluctance, *depart from them*.

And then, no intercession will prevail for them ; as he threatens by the same Prophet, chap. 15. verse 1. *Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this People ; cast them out of my sight and let them go forth ; away with them into Captivity, for they have lost my heart,*
and

and no intercession of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.

And when his Soul is once departed from a People, and his heart turn'd against them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will be let loose upon them; as we may read in the next *verse* of that

Jer. 15. 2. *Chapter: And it shall come to pass if they say unto thee, whither shall we go forth? Then shalt thou tell them, Thus saith the Lord, such as are for death to death, and such as are for the sword to the sword, and such as are for the famine to the famine, and such as are for the captivity to the captivity. For then God will be weary of repenting, as he tells them verse 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee and deliver thee, I am weary of repenting.* By our obstinate impenitency we harden the heart of God against us, and

Hos. 9. 12. *make him weary of repenting.* And when his soul is thus departed from a People, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. *Wo unto them, saith God by the Prophet, when I depart from them. Therefore be thou instructed O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.*

Having

Having given this account of the Words, I shall observe from them three things well worth our consideration.

First, The infinite goodness and patience of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*. How loth is He that things should come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and some kind of violence, as it were, offered to himself, brought to this severe resolution; his soul is, as it were, *rent* and *disjointed* from them.

Secondly, You see here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the misery and ruin of a sinful People. If they will be *instructed* and take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiser and better, then *his soul* will not *depart from them*, he will not bring upon them the *desolation* which he hath threatned.

Thirdly, You have here intimated the miserable case and condition of a People, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when *his soul departs from them*. For when God once leaves them, then all sorts

forts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I shall speak as briefly as I can to these *three Observations from the Text.*

- I. *First*, I observe the infinite patience and goodness of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.* How loth is God that things should come to this? He is very patient to particular persons, notwithstanding their great and innumerable provocations. *God is strong and patient, though men provoke him every day.* And much greater is his patience to whole Nations and great Communities of men.

How great was it to the old World, *when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*, for the space of an hundred and twenty years? And did not expire, till *he saw that the wickedness of man was grown great upon the earth, and that all flesh had corrupted its way*; not till it was necessary to drown the World to cleanse it, and to destroy Mankind to reform it, by beginning a *new* World upon the only righteous Family that was left of all the last generation of the *Old*. For so God testifies

stifies concerning Noah, when he commanded him to enter into the Ark, saying, *Come thou and all thy house into the Ark; for thee, that is, thee only, have I seen righteous before me in this Generation.* Gen. 7. 1.

The patience of God was great likewise to Sodom and Gomorrah and the Cities about them. For when *the cry of their sins had reached heaven*, and called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon them, to express the wonderful patience of God towards such grievous Sinners, though nothing is hid from his sight and knowledge, yet he is represented as coming down from Heaven to Earth on purpose to enquire into the truth of things, and *whether they were altogether according to the cry that was come up to him.* And when he found things as bad as was possible, yet then was he willing to have come almost to the lowest terms imaginable, that if there had been but *ten righteous persons* in those wicked Cities, *he would not have destroy'd them for the ten's sake.*

Nay he seems to come to lower terms yet, with the City of Jerusalem, Jer. 5. 1. *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment*

ment and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.

What can be imagin'd more slow, and mild, and merciful, than the proceedings of the Divine justice against a sinful People? God is represented in Scripture as taking a long time to *make ready his bow*, and to *whet his glittering sword*, before *his hand takes hold of vengeance*; as if the instruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and rusty and unready for use. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good man will step in and interpose to stay his hand? As we read *Psal. 106. 23. Therefore he said*, speaking of the People of *Israel*, *that he would destroy them*, had not *Moses his servant stood in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them*. And how kindly doth God take it of *Phinehas*, as a most acceptable piece of service done to him, and which he hardly knew how sufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a stop to his anger against the People of *Israel*: Inasmuch that the Psalmist tells us that *it was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations for evermore*. I will recite the whole passage at large, because it is remarkable.

markable. When the People of *Israel* were seduced into Idolatry and Whoredom by the Daughters of *Moab*, *Phinehas* in great zeal stood up and executed judgment upon *Zimri* and *Cozbi* in the very act : By which means the Plague which was broken out upon the Congregation of *Israel* was presently stayed. Hear what God says to *Moses* concerning this act of *Phinehas*. *The Lord spake unto Moses saying, Phinehas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned away my wrath from the Children of Israel, whilst he was zealous for my sake that I consumed them not. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Israel : That which God takes so kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for Him, is, that he pacified God's wrath towards the Children of Israel.*

And thus did God from time to time deal with the People of *Israel*, that great Example of the Old Testament of the merciful methods of the Divine Providence towards a sinful Nation. And an Example, as *St. Paul* tells us, purposely
recorded

3 Cor. 10. recorded for our admonition upon whom the
 11. ends of the World are come.

Let us therefore consider a little the astonishing patience of God towards that perverse People. After all the signs and wonders which he had wrought in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and for their support in the Wilderness; and notwithstanding their gross and stupid infidelity and horrible ingratitude to God their Saviour, and all their rebellious murmurings and discontents, yet he suffer'd their manners for the space of forty years.

And when they were at last peaceably settled in the promised Land; notwithstanding their frequent relapses into Idolatry, with what patience did God expect their repentance, and the result of all the merciful messages and warnings given them from time to time by his Prophets, as one that earnestly desir'd it and even
 Jer. 4. 14. long'd for it? O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? that is, how long wilt thou delude thy self with vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God by any other way than by repentance? And again,
 Jer. 13. 27. O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be? And chap. 8. ver. 6. says

says God there, *I hearkened and I heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?* Where God is represented, after the manner of men, waiting with great patience, as one that would have been glad to have heard any penitent word drop from them, to have seen any sign of their repentance and return to a better mind.

And when they made some shews of repentance, and had some fits of good resolution that did presently vanish and come to nothing, how passionately does God complain of their fickleness and inconstancy? O Ephraim, *what shall I do unto thee?* O Judah, *what shall I do unto thee?* *for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

And at last, when nothing would do, with what difficulty and reluctancy does God deliver them up into the hands of their Enemies? *How shall I give thee up* Hos. II. *Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee* 8, 9. *Judah? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not destroy Ephraim.* What a conflict is here? what

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tenderneſs and yerning of his bowels towards them? He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he is forced to it by the laſt neceſſity.

And when the Nation of the *Jews*, after their return from the Captivity of *Babylon*, had in the courſe of ſeveral Ages greatly corrupted themſelves, and fill'd up the meaſure of their ſins by *crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory*, yet how ſlow was the patience of God in bringing that fatal and final Deſtruction upon them? Not till after the moſt merciful warnings given to them, by the *Apoſtles* of our *Lord and Saviour*; not till after the moſt obſtinate impenitency of forty years, under the moſt powerful means of repentance that any People in the World ever enjoyed. I proceed to the

- II. *Second Obſervation from the Text, namely, What is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the ruin of a ſinful People? And that is, if they will be inſtructed and take warning by the threatnings of God to become wiſer and better, then his ſoul will not depart from them, and he will not bring upon them the deſolation threatned. Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee,*

thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited ; intimating, or rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive instruction and take warning the evil threaten'd shall not come. For what other reason can there be, why God should threaten so long before he strikes, and so earnestly press men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to spare them and to shew mercy to them?

And indeed, as I observ'd before, all the denunciations and threatnings of God to a sinful Nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that Nation turn from their evil ways, God will repent of the evil which he thought to do unto them, For God never passeth so irrevocable a Sentence upon a Nation, as to exclude the case of repentance: Nay on the contrary He gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. *How often would I have gathered thee*, says our merciful Lord when he wept over *Jerusalem*, *as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not* ; therefore *your House is left unto you desolate*.

God is very merciful to particular persons upon their repentance. When the *Prodigal Son* in the *Parable*, after all his

riot and lewdness came to himself and resolv'd to return home, his *Father seeing him yet afar off* coming towards him, *came out to meet him, and had compassion on him and kissed him.* And can any of us be so obstinate and hard-hearted, as not presently to resolve to repent and return, and to meet the compassions of such a Father? Who, after we have offended him to the uttermost, is upon the first discovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could possibly have been if we had never offended him.

Jonah 4.
11.

And much more is God ready to receive a Nation upon their sincere Repentance; when his Judgments must needs make great havock, and so many are like to suffer under them. This consideration God urgeth and pleads with his froward Prophet, in behalf of the great City of *Niniveh.* *And shall not I spare that great City of Niniveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, who cannot discern their right hand from their left?* that is, so many innocent children, by which we may judge of the vast number of the rest of the Inhabitants. For this is a great consideration with God in his sending of publick Calamities, the multitude of the Sufferers; and that not only

ly the guilty but the innocent also, without a special and miraculous Providence, must be involved in a common Calamity.

Sometimes God respites his Judgments upon the mere external humiliation of a People, and some formal testimonies and expressions of their repentance. When the People of *Israel sought God and enquired early after him*, though *they did but flatter him with their mouth, and their heart was not right with him*, yet the Psalmist tells us, *that being full of compassion he forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not*; that is, he forgave them so far as to respite their ruin. Psal. 78.

And much more will a sincere and effectual Repentance stay God's hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceness of his anger: Insomuch that after he had fix'd and determin'd the very Day for the destruction of *Niniveh*, and had engaged the credit of his Prophet in it, yet as soon as *he saw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways*, and how glad was he to see it? he presently repented of *the evil which he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not*. In this case God does not stand upon the reputation of his Prophet, by whom he had sent so peremptory a message to them; but his mercy

breaks through all considerations, and rejoiceth against judgment: For he cannot find in his heart to ruin those who by the terror of his judgments will be brought to repentance.

And this surely is a mighty motive and encouragement to repentance, to be assur'd that we shall find mercy; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the instruments of God's wrath are fix'd and ready for execution, and his hand is just taking hold of vengeance, yet even then a sincere repentance will mitigate his hottest displeasure and turn away his wrath. And if we will not come in upon these terms, we extort the judgments of God from him and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

III. *Thirdly* and lastly, the *Text* intimates to us the miserable case and condition of a People when God takes off his heart and affection from them, when he gives over all further care and concernment for them, and abandons them to their own wickedness and folly, and to the miserable effects and consequences thereof: *Wo unto them, when his soul departs from them:* For then all sorts of evils and calamities will

will rush in, and *wrath will come upon them to the uttermost*; as was threaten'd to the *Jews* a little before their final destruction, and executed upon them in the most terrible and amazing manner that ever was from the foundation of the World. *These*, as our Blessed Saviour expresses it, were *days of vengeance* indeed, that *all things which were written*, that is foretold by *Moses* and the *Prophets* concerning the fearful end of this perverse and stiff-neck'd People, *might be fulfilled*.

And because my *Text* speaks to *Jerusalem*, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*; though this was spoken to *Jerusalem* before her Captivity into *Babylon*, yet because this first Captivity was but a faint Type of her last and final Desolation by the *Romans*, when *God's Soul* was indeed departed from Her, and *Judea* was left desolate, a Land not inhabited: I shall therefore briefly represent to you the full effect of this Threatning in her last final Destruction, when *God's Soul* was, as it were, perfectly loosen'd and disjointed from Her: That you may see what the fierceness and power of *God's Anger* is, when he *departs from them*, and *wrath comes upon them to the uttermost*,

because they would not be *instructed and know the time of their visitation.*

Thus it was with the *Jews*, about forty years after the Passion of our Lord, whom *with wicked hands they had crucified and slain*: Then was God's soul departed from them: Then darkness and desolation came upon them; and they were in a far worse condition than a Countrey would be that is forsaken of the Sun and left condemn'd to a perpetual night, in which darkness and disorder, faction and fury do reign and rage; together with all the fatal consequences of *zeal and strife*, which, St. James tells us, are *confusion and every evil work*. For when God is once gone, all the good and happiness of Mankind departs together with Him: Then men fall foul upon one another, divide into Parties and Factions, and execute the vengeance of God upon themselves with their own hands.

Thus it happen'd to the *Jewish Nation*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and their final ruin was approaching. And that we might know their Fate, and be instructed by it, God provided and preserv'd a faithful Historian on purpose, who was an Eye witness of all that befel them: I mean *Josephus*, who was personally

nally engaged, and was a considerable Commander in the Wars of the *Jews* with the *Romans*, before the Siege of *Jerusalem*: And during the Siege was present in the *Roman Camp*, and being a *Jew* himself hath transmitted these things to posterity in a most exact and admirable *History*: such a History, as no man that hath the heart and bowels of a man can read without the greatest pity and astonishment.

In the *Preface* of that lamentable *History* he tells us, *that all the misfortunes and calamities which the World from the beginning of it had seen, compar'd with this last Calamity of the Jewish Nation, were but slight and inconsiderable.* He tells us likewise, that their *Civil dissensions* were the next and immediate cause of their confusion and ruin.

And this more than once: For when *Pompey*, about sixty years before our *Saviour's* birth, fate down before *Jerusalem*, he tells us, * that the *Factions* and divisions which they had among themselves^{f. 3.} were the cause of the taking the *City* and *Temple* at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the *Heads* of their *Factions* provok'd the *Romans*, and brought them unwillingly upon them,
and

and at last forced the best natur'd Prince in the World *Titus Vespasian* to that severity which he most earnestly desired by all means to have prevented. And he further tells us, that even before the Siege of *Jerusalem*, the Cities of *Judea* had all of them civil discords among themselves, and that in every City one part of the *Jews* fought against another.

And when *Jerusalem* began to be besieged, What a miserable condition was it in, by the cruelty of the *Zealots* under the command of *John the Son of Giorah*? And presently after another Faction arose under *Simon*, who enter'd into the City with a fresh Force and assaulted the *Zealots* in the Temple; so that most miserable havock was made between them. And then a *third* Faction started up under *Eleazer*, as bad as either of the other: So that infinite almost were the numbers of the People within the City that were barbarously slain by these Seditions.

And what an infatuation was this? when the Enemy was at the Gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole strength and force against one another: When the same courage and fury, which they spent so freely upon themselves, had it been turn'd with the

the like desperateness and obstinacy upon the *Romans*, might have endanger'd the whole force of the *Roman* Empire. Once or twice indeed they seem'd to lay aside their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence; but as soon as the danger of a present assault was over, they relaps'd into their former state of intestine enmity and dissention, as if that had been their main business, and the preservation of their City against the *Romans* only a work by the by, and not much to be regarded.

And to add to all their other miseries, they were so blinded by their own rage and madness, that they wilfully brought upon themselves an extreme Famine. For, as the *Historian* tells us, they themselves set on fire vast stores of corn and other necessaries, sufficient to have serv'd them for many years; and by this means the City was much sooner reduc'd, even by a Famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themselves.

This Famine, besides all the other miseries and cruelties which it occasion'd within the City, did force great numbers of them to steal out by night into the *Roman* Camp; where they met with as
cruel

cruel but a speedier death. For *Titus*, in hope to reduce them the sooner by terror, order'd all those that came out of the City to be crucified before the Walls. Which order was so severely executed, that for several days five hundred a day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place Crosses in, nor wood whereof to make them: So that they who once cried out so vehemently against our *Saviour*, *Crucify him, Crucify him*, had enough of it at last, and by the just and most remarkable judgment of God were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the sad Fate of a sinful People, when God is departed from them! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their misery increased, so did their Impiety to that degree, that the *Historian* tells
Lib. 5. c. 2. us, *they scorned and mocked at all divine and holy things, and derided the Oracles of the Prophets, esteeming them no better than Fables*; and, in a word, were carried to that extremity of wickedness, as not only to prophane their *Temple* in the highest manner, and to break the Laws of their own Religion, but even to violate the Laws of Nature and Humanity in the grossest Instances: which made their *Historian* to give that dismal character
of

of them, *that as he thought no City ever* Lib. 6.
suffer'd such things, so no Nation, from the c. 11.
beginning of the World, did ever so abound
in all manner of wickedness and impiety:
 A certain sign that God's Soul was depart-
 ed from them.

And the same *Historian* afterwards,
 upon consideration of the lamentable
 state into which their Seditions had
 brought them, breaks out into this doleful
 lamentation over them, *O miserable City!* Lib. 7. c. 1.
what didst thou suffer from the Romans,
though at last they set thee on fire to purge
thee from thy sins, that is to be compar'd
with those miseries which thou hast brought
upon thy self?

To such a dismal state did things come
 at last, that, as the same *Historian* relates,
many of the Jews prayed for the good success
of their Enemies, to deliver them from
their civil Dissensions, the Calamity where-
of was so great that their final Destruction
by the Romans did rather put an end to
their misery than increase it,

— *En! quo discordia Civis*
Perduxit miseros —

To conclude this sad Story. It was the
Jews themselves that by their own folly
 and

and diffensions forc'd the *Romans* to this sorrowful Victory over them ; for in truth all the remorse and pity was on the Enemies side. The *Romans* were little more than Spectators in this cruel Tragedy, the *Jews* acted it upon themselves : And they only who were arriv'd at that prodigious height of Impiety and wickedness were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of God upon one another : As if the *Prophet* had foretold this, when
 Jer. 2. 19. he says, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.*

When Impiety and wickedness are at their highest pitch in a Nation, then they themselves are the only proper instruments to punish one another. The *Romans* were by far too good and gentle to inflict a suffering upon the *Jews* that was equal to the evil of their doings : None but their own barbarous Selves, who were sunk down into the very lowest degeneracy of humane nature, were capable of so much cruelty and inhumanity as was requisite to execute the Judgment of God upon them to that degree which their sins had deserved.

You see, my Brethren, by what hath been said upon this Argument, what were the *Faults*, and what the *Fate* of the
Jewish

Jewish Nation. Now *these things*, as the *Apostle* expressly tells us, were written for our admonition, and to the intent that we upon whom the ends of the World are come might be instructed by them: We, I say, who next to the *Jewish Nation* seem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations of the Earth. We resemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.

But as I intend it not, so God forbid that there should be any just ground for a full and exact Parallel between us; Yet this I must say, that nothing ever came nearer to them than We do in several respects. In our fickleness and inconstancy, in our murmurings and discontents; for we are never pleas'd with what God does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: We resemble them likewise, in our horrible prophaneness and infidelity, and in our impiety and wickedness of several kinds: in our monstrous ingratitude and most unworthy returns to the God of our Salvation: and lastly, in our Factions and Divisions, which were the fatal sign of God's being departed from the *Jews*, and the immediate cause and means of those
dismal

dismal Calamities which wrought their final Ruin. And how can we chuse but dread lest their Fate should overtake us, the Example of whose Faults and Follies we do in so many things so nearly resemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our Fate, let us apply our selves to the great Duties of this Day; a serious and deep Repentance, and humiliation of our selves before Almighty God for the many and heinous Sins which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, against His Divine Majesty; by our prophaneness and impiety, by our lewdness and luxury, by our oppression and injustice, by our implacable malice and hatred one towards another, and by our senseless divisions and animosities one against another, without cause and without end: By our neglect of God's Worship, and prophanation of his Holy Day, and by our dreadful abuse of God's great and glorious Name in those horrid Oaths and Curses and Imprecations which are heard almost day and night in the streets of this great City.

For these and all other our innumerable provocations of the patience and goodness and long-suffering of God towards
us,

us, let us sadly repent our selves this Day, and *turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning : And rent our hearts and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God ; For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil : And who knoweth if he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him ? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned : Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

And let us earnestly beg of Him, that he would be pleased to prevent those terrible Judgments and Calamities which hang over us, and which our Sins have so justly deserved should fall upon us : And that He would perfect that wonderful Deliverance which he hath begun for us, and *establisb the thing which he hath wrought* : That He would bless *Them* whom he hath set in Authority over us ; and particularly, that He would preserve the Person of the *King* in his present Expedition, and crown him with victory and good success.

And to our Repentance and Prayers let us add our liberal Alms, and according to the counsel given by the *Prophet* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us *break off our sins by*
 (r) righ-

righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if so be it may be a lengthening of our tranquility.

We are yet, blessed be God, in the full enjoyment of peace and quiet at home, and of our Religion and Civil Liberties. God hath given us two excellent Princes sitting on the Throne together, and both of the same Religion with the main Body of the Nation; and as bright Examples of piety and goodness as *England* ever saw: And who do by all ways and means study and seek the good of the People committed to their charge.

So that if we did but know our own happiness, and how to value it, we might be the happiest People this day under Heaven: And yet for all this, we are very far from being happy; because we are neither contented, nor united; and tho we have all the materials of Happiness about us and within our reach, yet have we not the skill and wisdom to put them together.

Miserable People! that may be happy and will not; whom neither so fresh a Deliverance from so great a Danger as was just ready to have swallowed us up, nor the fear and apprehension of falling again into the like confusion, can be a warn-

warning to us from returning again unto the same folly : For those odious and unhappy Names of difference which some years ago sprang up among us, the Devil knows how, did seem whilst a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried: But no sooner was the danger over, but by a kind of *miraculous* infatuation, behold a sudden *Resurrection* of them, with greater heats and animosities, if possible, than before: Just as it was with the *Jews* in the Siege of *Jerusalem*, when the *Romans* had made a wide breach and the City was furiously assaulted, the Factions then gave *Truce* to one another, and ran in to the common defence; but as soon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afresh and prosecuted their main design of destroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us also, how like a Fate upon us does it look, that we are so soon alter'd from our wiser and better temper? Did we well and wisely before our late happy Revolution, when we united for our common defence against a common danger, and did let those *unlucky Names* of distinction fall, so that they seem'd to be quite extinguish'd? And can it be now

wife to revive them, and to take them up again; when the same danger in some degree, and from the same implacable Enemies, still hovers over us? No surely, it would not be wise, if the danger were quite past and over; but when it still remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than still to divide and quarrel among our selves? Will nothing but sad and bitter experience be an admonition to us? Will nothing but the last necessity and extremity of things bring us to our selves and teach us wisdom?

Methinks we should all now be glad to be at rest, after the tedious troubles and distractions, the fruitless quarrels and divisions of fifty years. So long I remember; and in all that space how very few years pass'd over us without some great Calamity and dismal Event. So that by this time one would think we should all be sick of our own follies, and so tir'd with our unprofitable feuds and dissensions, as to make both sides look about them, to see if any body will take pity on us, and step in to part our quarrels.

And now I begin to be sensible, that I have engag'd in a tender Point indeed; and do feel my self standing upon a very slippery

slippery place. For who is fit to interpose in such hot and fierce differences? who can do it without danger, or with any hopes of success? And yet for *Zion's* sake *I will not hold my peace*, for *Jerusalem's* sake *I will not keep silence*: Of so great consequence is it to the peace and happiness of this Church and Nation, that these Names and Distinctions of Parties should be laid down and abolish'd for ever.

In order whereunto I take it for granted and lay it for a Principle, that he who hopes to persuade both sides must provoke neither: And therefore I will not so much as enquire where the fault lies. It is in these Civil differences as in Family quarrels between Man and Wife, if any man ask on which side lies the fault; one may almost safely answer at a venture, on both sides. It must indeed begin on one, but if it be not presently heal'd and made up, the other Party is always so civil as to run in and take a share of the fault, that all the blame may not lie wholly on one side.

And now, my Brethren, let me for once persuade and prevail with you for your good: Let me be so happy as to say something that may sink into your hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good agree-

agreement with one another, *Have salt in your selves*, says our Blessed Saviour the great *Peace maker*, and *peace one with another*. By Salt is meant grace and spiritual wisdom, and if *that* do but rule and sway in our hearts, we shall then endeavour, *if it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men*. If we *have salt in our selves*, that is, if we be wise, we will then certainly *have peace one with another*.

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and distracted Nation, we should not then need to fear *all the power of the Enemy*. And this our Enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wisdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakness if we suffer our selves to be divided: For who that is wise will take counsel and advice from an Enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our *Jerusalem* would be as a *City that is compact together*, strong and impregnable.

Let us then *be instructed*, and *know, in this our day, things which belong to our Peace, before they be hid from our eyes*. And let us

Pfal. 122. all earnestly endeavour and pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *They shall prosper that love*

love her, says the *Psalmist*, and they do not love her, that do not seek her peace and endeavour by all means to procure it: *That peace may be within her walls, and prosperity within her Palaces*: The one cannot be without the other: without Peace there can be no Prosperity. And to go on with the words of the *Psalmist*, let every one of us say, yea let us all with one heart and voice say, *for our Brethren and Companions sake*, for the sake of our *Protestant Brethren* all the World over, let us say, *Peace be within thee*: *For the House of the Lord our God*, for the sake of our Holy Religion, and of that excellent Church whereof we all are, or ought to be Members, let every one of us say, *I will seek thy good*.

And what greater good can we do to the best Religion, how can we better serve the interest of it in all parts of the World, than by being at peace and unity among our selves, here in *England*? upon whom the eyes of all the *Protestants* abroad are fixed, as the Glory of the *Reformation*, and the great bulwark and support of it.

That so under the Providence of Almighty God, and the conduct of two such excellent Princes as He hath now
 bless'd

bleſs'd us withal: The One ſo brave and valiant, and Both of them ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo religious, we may at laſt arrive at a firm eſtabliſhment, and become *like mount Zion that cannot* be moved; the perfection of Beauty and Strength, and the admiration and *joy of the whole Earth*; which God of his infinite goodneſs grant, for his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*: To whom, with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thankſgiving and praiſe both now and ever, *Amen.*

*A Conscience void of Offence,
towards God and Men.*

I N A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N,

A T

W H I T E - H A L L,

February the 27th 1697.

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*A Conscience void of Offence,
towards God and Men.*

ACTS xxiv. 16.

*And herein do I exercise my self, to
have always a Conscience void of
offence, towards God, and towards
men.*

THese words are part of the Defence which St. Paul made for himself, before *Fælix* the Roman Governour.

In which he first of all vindicates himself from the charge of Sedition, *ver. 12.* They neither found me in the Temple, disputing with any man; neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogue, nor in the City; that is, they could not charge him with making any disturbance either in Church or State.

After this, he makes a free and open profession of his Religion, *ver. 14.* *But this I confess, that after the way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets:* Here he declares the *Scriptures* to be the *Rule* of his *Faith*, in opposition to the *Oral Tradition* of the *Pharisees*.

More particularly he asserts the *Doctrine* of the *Resurrection*, which was a principal *Article* both of the *Jewish* and the *Christian Religion*; *ver. 15.* *And I have hope also towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.*

And having made this declaration of his *Faith*, he gives an account of his *Life*, in the words of the *Text, ver. 16.* *And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.*

Herein, ἐν τῷ, that is, *in this work*, do I employ my self; or as others render it, *in the mean time*, whilst I am in this *World*; or as others, I think most probably, *for this cause and reason*, ἐν τῷ, for διὰ τῷ, for this reason, because I believe a *Resurrection*, therefore have I a conscientious care of my *life*, and all the actions of it. The

The Discourse I intend to make upon these words, shall be comprized in these following Particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, *to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.*

II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course; to have *always* a conscience void of offence.

III. Here is his earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, *I exercise my self.*

IV. Here is the principle and immediate Guide of his Actions, which St. Paul here tells us was his *Conscience.*

V. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a good Conscience.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to this, which St. Paul tells us was the belief of a Resurrection, and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments consequent upon it; *for this cause; because I hope for a Resurrection both of the just and unjust, I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* I shall speak but briefly to the three first of these Particulars, that I may be larger in the rest.

I. *I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice.* It hath regard to the whole compass of his Duty, as it respects God and Man. *I exercise my self,* says St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* And this distribution of our Duty, under these two general Heads, is very frequent in Scripture. The Decalogue refers our Duty to these two Heads: And accordingly our Saviour comprehends the whole Duty of Man in those two great Commandments, the love of God and of our Neighbour, *Matth. 22. 38.* Upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets, that is, all the Moral Precepts, which are dispers'd up and down in the Law and the Prophets, may be referr'd to these two general Heads.

II. *II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course.* St. Paul says, that he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence; *disputando, continually,* at all times, in the whole course of his life. We must not only make conscience of our ways by fits and starts, but in the general course and tenour of our lives and actions, without any balks and intermissions.

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There are some that will refrain from grosser Sins, and be very strict at some Seasons; as during the Time of a Solemn Repentance, and for some days before they receive the Sacrament; and perhaps for a little while after it: And when these devout Seasons are over, they let themselves loose again to their former lewd and vitious course: But Religion should be a constant frame and temper of mind, discovering it self in the habitual course of our lives and actions.

III. *Here is likewise a very earnest care and endeavour to this purpose.* Herein do I exercise my self, says St. Paul. The word *ἀσκάω*, which is here render'd *exercise*, is a word of a very intense signification, and does denote that St. Paul applied himself to this business with all his care and might, and that he made it his earnest study and endeavour: And so must we; we must take great care to understand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning good and evil, that we may not mistake the nature of things, and call good evil, and evil good: We must apply our minds in good earnest to be thoroughly instructed in all the parts of our Duty, that so we may not be at a

III.

loss what to do when we are call'd to the practice of it: And when we know our Duty, we must be true and honest to our selves, and very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. I proceed in the

IV.

IVth Place to consider *the principle and immediate Guide of our Actions*, which St. Paul here tells us was his *Conscience*; *I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence*: By which he does not only mean a resolution to follow the dictate and direction of his Conscience, but likewise a due care to inform his Conscience aright, that he might not in any thing transgress the Law of God, and his Duty.

Conscience is the great Principle of moral Actions, and our Guide in matter of Sin and Duty. It is not the Law and Rule of our Actions, *that* the Law of God only is; but it is our immediate Guide and Directour, telling us what is the Law of God and our Duty.

But because *Conscience* is a word of a very large and various signification, I shall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common speech concerning *Conscience*, every man

is represented as having a kind of *Court* and *Tribunal* in his own breast, where he tries himself and all his *Actions*: And *Conscience*, under one Notion or other, sustains all parts in this Tryal: The *Court* is call'd the *Court* of a man's *Conscience*, and the *Barr* at which the Sinner stands impleaded, is call'd the *Barr* of *Conscience*: *Conscience* also is the *Accuser*; and it is the *Record* and *Register* of our Crimes, in which the memory of them is preserv'd: And it is the *Witness* which gives testimony for, or against us; hence are those expressions of *the testimony of our Consciences*, and that *a man's own Conscience is to him instead of a thousand Witnesses*: And it is likewise the *Judge* which declares the Law, and what we ought, or ought not to have done, in such or such a Case, and accordingly passeth *Sentence* upon us by *acquitting* or *condemning* us. Thus, according to common use of Speech, *Conscience* sustains all imaginable parts in this *Spiritual Court*: It is the *Court*, and the *Bench*, and the *Barr*; the *Accuser*, and *Witness*, and *Register*, and all.

But I shall only at present consider *Conscience* in the most common and famous Notion of it, as it is the Principle
or

or Faculty whereby we judge of moral Good and Evil, and do accordingly direct and govern our Actions: So that in short, *Conscience* is nothing else but the *Judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions*; that is, the *Good, or Evil, or Indifferency* of them; telling us what things are commanded by God, and consequently are our *Duty*; what things are forbidden by Him, and consequently are *sinful*; what things are neither commanded nor forbidden, and consequently are *indifferent*. I proceed in the

V. Vth Place, to give some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a conscience void of offence. And they shall be these following:

First, Never in any case to act contrary to the persuasion and conviction of our Conscience. For that certainly is a great Sin, and that which properly offends the Conscience and renders us *guilty*; *guilt* being nothing else but trouble arising in our minds from a consciousness of having done contrary to what we are verily persuaded was our Duty: And though perhaps this persuasion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the same

same so long as this persuasion continues; because every man's Conscience is a kind of God to him, and accuseth or absolves him according to the present persuasion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend against the light and conviction of our own mind.

Secondly, We should be very careful to inform our Consciences aright, that we may not mistake concerning our Duty; or if we do, that our error and mistake may not be grossly wilful and faulty.

And this Rule is the more necessary to be consider'd and regarded by us, because generally men are apt to think it a sufficient excuse for any thing, that they did it according to their Conscience. But this will appear to be a dangerous mistake, and of very pernicious consequence to the Souls of men, if we consider these two things.

1st, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conscience.

2^{ly}, And these Sins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them.

1st, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conscience.

science. Men may neglect and abuse themselves so far, as to do some of the worst and wickedest things in the World with a perswasion that they do well.

John 16. 2. Our Saviour tells his Disciples that *the time should come when the Jews should put them to death, thinking they did God good service*: Nay the Jews murdered the Son of God himself through ignorance and a false perswasion of mind: *Father, forgive*

Luke 23. 34. *them*, says our Blessed Lord, when he was breathing out his Soul upon the Cross, *for they know not what they do.* And St. Peter, after he had charged the

Acts 3. 17. Jews with *killing the Prince of Life*, he presently adds, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers.* And St. Paul, in mitigation of that great Crime, says, *Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of life and glory*: And concerning himself he tells us,

Acts 26. 9. *That he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth*: And yet notwithstanding that he acted herein according to the perswasion of his Conscience, he tells us that he had been a *blasphemer, and a persecutour, and injurious, and a murderer, and in a word, the greatest of Sinners.* So that Men may be guilty of the greatest

greatest Sins in following an erroneous Conscience. And,

2ly, *These Sins may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them.*

Where the ignorance and mistake is not grossly wilful, there God will accept of a general repentance; but where it is grossly wilful, great Sins committed upon it are not pardon'd without a particular Repentance for them: And an error which proceeds from want of ordinary human care and due Government of a man's self, is in a great degree wilful: As when it proceeds from an unreasonable and obstinate prejudice, from great pride and self-conceit, and contempt of counsel and instruction; or from a visible byass of self-interest, or when it is accompanied with a furious passion and zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things, contrary to the light of nature and the common sense of humanity: An error proceeding from such causes, and producing such effects, is wilful in so high a degree, that whatever evil is done in vertue of it is almost equally faulty with a direct and wilful violation of the Law of God.

The ignorance and mistake doth indeed make the person so mistaken more
capa-

capable of forgiveness, which is the ground of our Saviour's Prayer for his Murtherers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: St. Paul likewise tells us, that he found mercy upon this account, *Nevertheless, says he, I obtained*
 1 Tim. i. 13. *mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief*, that is, through a false persuasion of mind, not believing it to be a Sin: And yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. Peter after he had convinced the Jews of their great Sin in crucifying Christ, though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to the pardon and forgiveness of it: And therefore
 Acts 3. 19. *after he had said, I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers, he immediately adds, Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.*

So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they embrace in order to practice, and not to suffer themselves to be hurried away by an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion, without a due and calm examination of things, nor to be over-born by pride, or humour,
 or

or partiality, or interest, or by a furious and extravagant zeal : Because proportionably to the voluntariness of our Error will be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that Error. Indeed where our Error is involuntary, and morally invincible, God will consider it, and make allowance for it ; but where it is voluntary, and occasioned by our own gross fault and neglect, we are bound to consider, and to rectifie our mistake : For what-ever we do contrary to the Law of God and our Duty, in vertue of that false persuasion, we do it at our utmost peril, and must be answerable to God for it, notwithstanding we did it according to the dictate of our Conscience.

A *Third Rule* is this, that in all doubts of Conscience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one side, when there is perhaps as much or greater reason of doubting on the other : And consequently, that we be as tractable and easie to receive satisfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in cases that are equal : I mean, where our passions and interests are not concern'd, as well as where they are. And if we do

not

not do this, it is a sign that we are partial in our pretences of Conscience, and that we do not aim meerly at the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, but have some other interest and design.

For it is a very suspicious thing, when men's doubts and scruples bear all on one side, especially if it be on that side which is against charity, and peace, and obedience to Government, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil: In this case I think that a meer doubt, and much more a scruple, may, nay, ought in reason to be overruled by the Command of Authority, by the opinion and judgment of wise and good men, and in consideration of the publick peace, and of the unity and edification of the Church.

Not that a man is in any case to go against the clear persuasion and conviction of his own mind, but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing, it seems to me in that case very reasonable that a man should suffer a mere doubt or scruple to be over-rul'd by any of those weighty considerations which I mentioned before.

The *Fourth* Rule is, that all pretences of Conscience are vehemently to be suspected;

spected, which are accompanied with turbulent passion and a furious zeal. It is an hundred to one but such a man's Conscience is in the wrong. It is an excellent saying of St. James, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, Jam. i. 20. that is, the fierce passions of men are no proper instruments to promote Religion, and to accomplish any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be transported with a wild zeal, and pretend conscience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an error: None are so likely to judge amiss, as they whose minds are clouded and blinded by their passions,

*Nubila mens est,
Hæc ubi regnant.*

Boeth.

And if men would carefully observe themselves, they might almost certainly know when they act upon Reason and a true Principle of Conscience. A good Conscience is easie to it self, and pleased with its own doings; but when a man's passion and discontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do, as it were, bear down his Conscience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneasie state.

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There can hardly be a broader sign that a man is in the wrong, than to *rage and be confident*: Because this plainly shews that the man's Conscience is not settled upon clear reason, but that he hath brought over his Conscience to his interest, or to his humour and discontent.

And though such a man may be so far blinded by his passion as not to *see* what is right, yet methinks he should *feel* himself to be in the wrong by his being so very hot and impatient.

Art thou sure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and hast reason to be pleased: What cause then, what need is there of being angry? Hath a man Reason on his side? What would he have more? Why then does he fly out into passion? which as it gives no strength to a bad argument, so I could never yet see that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

Of the great evil, and the perpetual mistake of this furious kind of Zeal, the *Jews* are a lively and a lamentable Example, in their carriage towards our Blessed *Saviour* and his Apostles: And more particularly *St. Paul*, when he persecuted the *Christians* from a false and erroneous persuasion of his Conscience. Hear how

how St. Paul describes himself and his own doings whilst he was acted by an erroneous Conscience: *I persecuted*, says Acts 22. 4. *he, this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women*: And in another Chapter, *I verily* Acts 26. 9. *thought with my self, that I ought to do many things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth*: Here was his erroneous Conscience. Let us next see what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it; ver. 10, 11: *Which things*, says he, *I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the Saints I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them, and punish'd them oft in every Synagogue, and compell'd them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange Cities*. When Conscience transports men with such a furious zeal and passion, it is hardly ever in the right; or if it should happen to be so, they who are thus transported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cause, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong, even when they are in the right.

Fifthly, All pretences of Conscience are likewise to be suspected, which are

not accompanied with modesty and humility, and a teachable temper and disposition, willing to learn and to be better inform'd. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into mistakes; because pride and fulness of a man's self does keep out knowledge, and obstructs all the passages by which wisdom and instruction should enter into men: Besides that it provokes God to abandon men to their own follies and mistakes; for *God resisteth the proud*, but *the meek will be guide in judgment*, and *will give more grace and wisdom to the humble*. When men are once come to this, to think themselves wiser than their Teachers, and to despise and cast off their Guides, no wonder if *then* they go astray.

Lastly, Let us be sure to mind that which is our plain and unquestionable duty: the great things of Religion, wherein the life and substance of it doth consist; and *the things likewise which make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another*: And let us not suffer our disputes about lesser matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: But let it be our great care not to fail in those greater things which are comprehended under

der the *two great Commandments of the Law*, the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: Let us be strict and constant in our piety and devotion towards *God*; chaste and temperate in reference to *our selves*; just and honest, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards *all men*; submissive and obedient to our *Superiours, Natural, Civil, and Spiritual*. A due regard to these great Vertues of the *Christian* life is the way to *keep a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men*: And surely the best means to have our doubts cleared about matters of lesser moment in Religion, is heartily to set about the practice of the great and unquestionable Duties of it: So our *Blessed Saviour* hath assur'd us, that *if any man will do the will* John 7.17. *of God, he shall know of his Doctrine whether it be of God*. I come now in the

VIth and Last place, to consider the VI.
great Motive and Encouragement to this
conscientious care of our Lives and Actions;
which St. Paul here tells us was his be-
lief of a *Resurrection*, and of the Rewards
and Punishments consequent upon it; I
have hope, says he, towards God, that
there shall be a *Resurrection both of the just*

and unjust: For this cause therefore I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.

If we believe *the Resurrection of the dead, and a future Judgment*, we ought to be very careful to discharge a good Conscience now, in order to the rendering of a good *Account* hereafter; that we may be sincere and without offence, with respect to the day of Christ, as the *Apostle* expresseth it. For when that great Day of Recompences shall come, we shall most assuredly find that nothing will *then* raise our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witness of a good Conscience: And therefore we should make that our constant care and companion now, which will *then* be our great comfort and rejoycing, a good Conscience and the testimony of it, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the Great Judge of the World, nothing will fill our minds with so much terrour, and our faces with so much confusion, as the clamorous accusations of a guilty Conscience; which will be more than a thousand witnesses against

gainst us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and pass almost as severe a Sentence upon us as the Judge himself can.

This is that which will make the sinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever : And one of the principal ingredients of his misery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorse of his own mind for his wilful wickedness and folly ; which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quench'd.

This consideration ought to have a mighty Operation upon us to make us very careful to have Consciences void of offence *now*, that they may be free from torment and anguish *hereafter* : That when we shall come into the other World, we may not be eternally displeas'd with our selves, and enrag'd at our own doings ; but may carry with us thither Consciences clear of all guilt, either by Innocency, or by Repentance.

The firm belief of a future state of eternal Happiness or misery in another World is the great weight or spring that sets a going those two powerful Principles of humane Activity, the Hopes and the Fears of men ; and is in its Nature so

fitted to raise these Passions to that degree, that did not experience shew us the contrary, one would think it morally impossible for humane Nature to resist the mighty force of it.

All men are sensible, more or less, at one time or other of the true force of these Arguments; but the mischief is, that in some persons they work quite the wrong way, and instead of leading men to Repentance, they drive them to Infidelity: They cannot deny the force of these Arguments, if they were true; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true: And so far they are in the right, that granting these things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwise than they do: But here is their fatal miscarriage, that being resolv'd upon an evil course, since they cannot reconcile their practice with such Principles as these, they will fit their Principles to their practice; and so they will believe nothing at all of the Rewards and Punishments of another World, lest this should disturb them in their course: Vain men! as if Heaven and Hell must needs vanish and disappear, because some witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

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These men are Infidels in their own defence, and merely for the quiet of their own minds; that their Consciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right belief and an evil Conscience are but unsuitable companions; they are quarrelsome Neighbours, and must needs live very uneasily by one another. He that believes the Principles of Religion, and yet is conscious to himself that he hath liv'd contrary to them, and still continues to do so, how can he possibly have any peace and quiet in his mind? unless like *Jonah* he can sleep in a storm, and his conscience be, as it were, *seared with a hot iron*: For if his Conscience be awake, and in any degree sensible, the evident danger of eternal ruine, continually hanging over him, must in reason either drive him to repentance or to despair: If so forcible and violent an Argument can make no impression upon us, we are stupid and bewitch'd, we are lost and undone, we are wretched and miserable for ever.

But besides the future Reward of a holy and conscientious course, which is *unspeakable and full of glory*; it hath also this present fruit, this *earnest*, as I may say, and ready money in hand, the peace
and

and satisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable *than thousands of gold and silver*; the unspeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath most need of it: For it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the forest afflictions and calamities of Life, but even at the hour of Death; when the miseries of life oppress him, and the sorrows of death compass him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no such comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witness in our own breasts of our own innocency and integrity: When we are afflicted by God, or persecuted and revild by men, it cannot but be a mighty consolation to us to be conscious to our selves of our own sincerity. For though no man can acquit and justify himself before God as to the perfect innocency of his life, in which sense St. *1 Cor. 4-4.* Paul says, that *though he knew nothing by himself, yet was he not thereby justified*; I say, though no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general course and tenour of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to God, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him

him as a tender and compassionate Father, and not as an angry and revengeful Judge.

With this, holy and patient *Job*, under all those terrible disasters and calamities which beset him, was able in some measure to comfort himself: After he had lost all, and he had a great deal to lose; when he was forsaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his best Friends concerning his sincerity. In these sad and disconsolate circumstances, what was it that bore up his spirit? nothing but the conscience of his own integrity. See with what resolution and constancy of mind he asserts and maintains it: *I will not, says he, remove mine integrity from me: my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go: mine heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live:* You see, that when every thing else was gone, his integrity stuck by him, and supported him to the last.

And as to persecutions and sufferings from men, our own innocence, and the goodness of our Cause, will be our best comfort under them: When we are not guilty to our selves that we have deserved them from men, and are inwardly assur'd that whatever we patiently suffer
for

for God and a good conscience, will all turn to our account another Day, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

This was *that* which supported the first *Christians*, that *noble Army of Martyrs*, under all those bitter and cruel persecutions, which had otherwise been beyond all humane patience to have endur'd: This comforted them in all their tribulations; *Our rejoycing*, says St. Paul, *is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.*

So likewise under that inferiour but equally malicious sort of persecution, of which this Age is so very profuse and prodigal, I mean the causeless calumnies and reproaches of men: If under these we can but approve our Consciences to God, the uncharitable Censures of men are not so much to be regarded by us: some impression they will make upon a tender mind, but we must not, if we can help it, let them sink too deep into our spirits: *If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God; and then surely much more towards men: If God and our own Consciences do but acquit us, methinks it should be no such difficult*

1 Joh. 3. 21.

difficult matter to bear the slanders and hard censures of men.

But above all other times, the comfort of a good Conscience is most sensible, and most considerable, at the hour of Death ; For as nothing dejects a man's spirit more, and sends him down with so much sorrow to the grave, as the guilt of an evil Conscience ; what terrour and anguish, what rage and despair do seize upon a Sinner at that time, when he reflects upon what he hath done, and considers what he is like to suffer ? So on the other hand, there is nothing that revives and raises the fainting spirits of a dying man, like the Conscience of a holy and useful life, which hath brought glory to God, and good to men. *The wicked, says Solomon, is driven away in his wickedness,* that is, he is carried out of the World, as it were, in a storm and tempest : *But the righteous hath hope in his death ;* he usually dies calmly and comfortably : *Mark the perfect man, says David, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.* Prov. 14. 32. Ps. 37. 37.

If a man be conscious to himself that he hath sincerely endeavour'd to keep the commandments of God, and to do the things which please Him ; if he hath li-
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ved inoffensively, and, as St. Paul says of
 Acts 23.1. himself, *in all good conscience before God,
 and men*; what an unspeakable consolation must it be to him, in that dark and
 gloomy time, and when he is *walking
 through the valley of the shadow of death,*
 then *to fear no evil*? and to be able with
 our Blessed Saviour to say, though in a
 much inferiour measure and degree, *Fa-
 ther, I have glorified thee on the earth, I
 have finished the work which thou hast given
 me to do*: And to be able to look Death
 in the face with the like courage and
 constancy of mind as St. Paul did when
 he saw it approaching towards him: *I
 am now,* says he, *ready to be offer'd, and
 the time of my departure is at hand*; *I
 have fought a good fight, I have finish'd
 my race, I have kept the faith*; henceforth
 there is laid up for me a Crown of righte-
 2 Tim. 4. ousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge
 6, 7, 8. shall give me at that day. A comfortable
 Death, that is free from the stings and
 upbraidings, the terrours and tortures, the
 confusion and amazement of a guilty
 Conscience, is a happiness so desireable,
 as to be well worth the best care and en-
 deavour of a man's whole life.

Let us then have a conscientious re-
 gard to the whole compass of our Duty,
 and,

and, with *St. Paul*, *Let us exercise our selves to have always a Conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men*: And let us never do any thing whereby we shall offer violence to the light of our minds. God hath given us this Principle to be our constant guide, and companion; and who-ever, after due care to inform himself aright, does sincerely follow the dictate and direction of this Guide, shall never fatally miscarry: But who-ever goes against the clear dictate and conviction of his Conscience, in so doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and sins against God and his own Soul.

And to the end we may keep our Consciences clear of guilt, we should frequently examine our selves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our selves to a strict account for them; that where-in-soever we have fail'd of innocency, we may make it up by repentance; and may get our Consciences clear'd of guilt by pardon and forgiveness: And if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the testimony of our Consciences; because many great Sins may slip out of our memories without a particular repentance for them,
which

which yet do require and stand in need of a particular repentance.

Especially, we should search our Consciences more narrowly at these more solemn Times of repentance, and when we are preparing our selves to receive the Holy Sacrament: And if at these Times our hearts do accuse and condemn us for any thing, we should not only heartily lament and bewail it before God, but sincerely resolve by God's Grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that Sin which we have then repented of, and have ask'd forgiveness of God for: For if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our Consciences afresh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the last place, We should reverence our Consciences, and stand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their testimony and verdict: For Conscience is a domestick Judge, and a kind of familiar God: And therefore, next to the Supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, every man should be afraid to offend his own Reason and Conscience, which when-ever we knowingly do amiss, will beat us with many stripes, and handle us more severely than the greatest Enemy we have
in

in the World: So that next to the dreadful sentence of the great Day, every man hath reason to dread the sentence of his own Conscience. *God indeed is greater than our hearts, and knows all things*; but under Him we have the greatest reason to fear the judgment of our own Consciences: For nothing but that can give us Comfort, and nothing can create so much trouble and disquiet to us.

And though the judgment of our Consciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reason to have great regard to it; and that upon several Accounts, which I shall but briefly mention, and so conclude.

First, Because the judgment of our Conscience is free from any compulsion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no; and make us to pass sentence against our selves, whether we see reason for it or not.

Secondly, The sentence of our own Consciences is very likely to be impartial, at least not too hard on the severe side; because men naturally love themselves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own case: All the World cannot bribe a man against himself: There is no man whose mind is not either distemper'd

by melancholy, or deluded by false Principles, that is apt to be credulous against himself, and his own interest and peace.

Thirdly, The judgment which our Conscience passeth upon our own Actions, is upon the most intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of their true motives and ends. We may easily be deceiv'd in our judgment of the Actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worse than in truth they are: Because we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what circumstances there may be to excuse or aggravate them; how strong the temptation was, or how weak the judgment of him that was seduc'd by it into error and folly.

But we are conscious to all the secret springs, and motives, and circumstances of our own Actions: We can descend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and search into the most retired corners of our intentions and ends; which none, besides our selves, but only God can do; for excepting *Him* only, *none knows the things of a man but the Spirit of a man which is in him.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, The Sentence of our Conscience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou mayest possibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermost parts of the Earth, but thou canst not stir one step from thy self: In vain shalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee and hide thee from the sight of thine own Conscience.

Wretched and miserable man! when thou hast offended and wounded thy Conscience: For whither canst thou go, to escape the eye of this Witness, the terror of this Judge, the torment of this Executioner? A man may as soon get rid of himself, and quit his own being, as fly from the sharp Accusations and stinging Guilt of his own Conscience; which will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by repentance and forgiveness.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by evil Spirits, and yet the Spirit of a man which is in him, thoroughly affrighted with its own Guilt, may be a more ghastly and amazing Spectacle than all the Devils in Hell: There is no such frightful Apparition in the World, as a man's own guilty and terrified Conscience

ence staring him in the face : *A spirit that is thus wounded, who can bear ?*

To conclude ; Let these considerations prevail with us always to live, not with regard to the opinion of others, which may be grounded upon mistake , or may not indeed be their opinion, but their flattery ; but with regard to the judgment of our own Conscience, which though it may sometimes be mistaken, can never be brib'd and corrupted : We may be hypocrites to others and base flatterers, but our Consciences when-ever they are thoroughly awaken'd are always sincere, and deal truly with us, and speak to us as they think.

Therefore what-ever we say or do, let it be sincere ? For though hypocrisie may for a while preserve our esteem and reputation with others, yet it can signifie nothing to the peace of our own minds : And then what will it avail us to conceal any thing from other men, when we can hide nothing that we say or do from our own Consciences ?

The Summ of all is this : If we would keep a Conscience void of offence, let us always be calm and considerate, and have the patience to examine things thoroughly
and

and impartially : Let us be humble and willing to learn, and never too proud and stiff to be better inform'd : Let us do what we can to free our selves from prejudice and passion, from self-conceit and self-interest, which are often too strong a byass upon the judgments of the best men, as we may see every day in very sad and melancholy instances: And having taken all due care to inform our Consciences a-right, let us follow the judgment of our minds in what we do ; and then we have done what we can to please God.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good Conscience, we should always be easie, and good company to our selves : But if we offend our Consciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappiest breach in the World ; we stir up a quarrel in our own breasts, and arm our own minds against our selves ; we create an enemy to our selves in our own bosoms, and fall out with the best and most inseparable Companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, *a good Conscience* will be *a continual Feast*, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day

294 *A Conscience void of Offence, &c.*

which nothing else can : And then what-
ever happen to us, we may *commit our*
souls to God in well-doing, as into the hands
of a faithful Creatour, To whom with our
Blessed Saviour and Redeemer, and the
Holy Ghost the Comforter, be all honour
and glory, now and ever. Amen.

How

*How to keep a truly Religious
Fast.*

I N A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N,

A T

WHITE-HALL,

September the 16th 1691.

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VI

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*How to keep a truly Religious
Fast.*

ZECH. vij. V.

*Speak unto all the People of the Land,
and to the Priests, saying, When
ye fasted and mourned in the fifth
and seventh month, even those se-
venty years, DID YE AT ALL
FAST UNTO ME, EVEN
UNTO ME ?*

IN the beginning of this *Chapter* the
People of the *Jews*, who were then
rebuilding the Temple at *Jerusalem*,
and had already far advanced the work,
though it was not perfectly finish'd till
about two years after, send to the *Priests*
and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them,
whether they should still continue the
Fast

Fast of the *fifth* Month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to observe during the seventy Years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of feasting and gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an Answer in this, and the following *Chapter*. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did indeed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence of a Religious Fast, *verses 4, 5*. *Then came the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* The enquiry was particularly concerning the *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, because the occasion of that was more considerable than of all the other; but the Answer of God mentions the *Fasts* of the *fifth* and *seventh* Months, these two being probably observ'd with greater solemnity than the other.

But

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the original and occasion of all their *monthly Fasts* : which as appears from other places of Scripture, in short, was this : When the *Jews* were carried away Captive into *Babylon*, in a deep sense of this great Judgment of God upon them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed *four annual Fasts*, which they observed during their seventy years Captivity, viz. the *Fast* of the *fourth* Month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the Wall of *Jerusalem*, which we find mention'd, *Jer.* 52. 6, 7. The *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, in memory of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, verses 12, 13. The *Fast* of the *seventh* Month, in remembrance of the slaying of *Gedaliah*, upon which followed the dispersion of the *Jews*, of which we have an account, *Jer.* 42. 1, 2. And the *Fast* of the *tenth* Month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of *Jerusalem*, of which we find mention, *2 Kings* 25. 1.

In this order we find these *four* Annual Fasts mention'd, *Zechar.* 8. 19. not according to the order of the Events, but
of

Zech. 8.
18, 19.

of the Months of the several Years in which these Events happened: And there likewise God gives a full Answer to this Enquiry concerning the continuance of these *annual Fasts* namely, That they should for the future be turned into solemn Days of joy and gladness. *And the word of the Lord of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth Month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the Fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful Feasts.*

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* that is, did these *Fasts* truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this Chapter; *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying; Execute judgment,*

Verse 9,
10, 11,
12, 13.

ment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart: But they refused to hearken, and pull'd away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant-stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet Zechary calls *fasting unto Him, even unto Him*, the Prophet Isaiah calls *the Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day*

day to the Lord. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer, &c.

From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the Jews were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the *Text*: *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general, the fault which God finds

finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but fail'd in their main design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives : For which reason he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by Him as perform'd *unto Him*, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *First*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our selves, I shall consider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to *fast unto God*, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds.

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minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that he would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon our selves and others as are needful and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely,

- II. II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance

vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest prayers and supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fasting and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's Assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an Occasion as this.

First, We should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins and Miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance should begin with our selves and our own Sins, because Repentance is always design'd to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular Persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* prescribes as the true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedication of the Temple: *If there be*, says he, *in the Land*
 1 Kings 8. 37, 38, 39, *famine; if there be pestilence, blasting,*
 40. *mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Cities: what-ever plague, what-ever sickness there be; what prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, and spread forth his hands towards this House: Then hear thou*

thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whose heart thou knowest, for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gavest to their Fathers.

You see here that in case of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation must begin with particular Persons: *What prayer or supplication so-ever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular persons must be convinced of their personal Sins and Transgressions, before God will hear the Prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And because we cannot perform this part of confessing and bewailing our own personal Sins, and of testifying our particular Repentance for them, in the publick Congregation, any otherwise than by joining with them in a general Humiliation and Repentance; therefore we should do well, on the Day before the

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publick

publick Fast, or at least the Morning before we go to the publick Assembly, to humble our selves before God in our Families, and especially in our Closets; confessing to Him, with great shame and sorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the several Aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of against the Divine Majesty, so far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earnestly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*.

And so likewise, after we return from the Church, we should retire again into our Closets, and there renew our Repentance, with most serious and sincere Resolutions of reforming in all those particulars which we have confessed and repented of. And if we would have our Resolutions to come to any good, we must make them as distinct and particular as we can; and charge it upon our selves, as to such and such Sins, for which we have declared our sorrow and repentance, that we will amend and do better for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortifie these good Resolutions, in the best man-

manner we can, by serious consideration and by solemn promises of better obedience, and of a more conscientious Care of our Lives and all our Actions for the future : And then, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we should implore the Assistance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great End of a solemn Fast and Humiliation will be in some good Measure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is, by being hudled up and lost in a confused and general Repentance, which commonly ends together with the publick Assembly, without any real and permanent Effect upon particular Persons : Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their Sins ; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the same Affection for his Sins which he had before, and a secret Resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the Jews. They had their solemn monthly Fasts, in which they made a great shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sack-cloth*

Jer. 8. 6.

cloth and ashes under them: But there was no inward change of their minds, no real Reformation of their Lives; and as soon as ever the publick Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil Course. So God complains of them; *I hearkned, says He, and I heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusbeth into the battel. They spake not aright, that is, they did not take the right Method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themselves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true general Repentance: No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?*

And as they had no sense of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them; but as soon as ever the publick Fasting

Fasting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the same eager and furious Appetite; *they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel*, that is, without any consideration, or sense of danger.

Secondly, We should likewise upon this Day, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye will not return*, says he Jer. 13. 17. to that obdurate People, *my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, or obstinacy; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's Flock is carried away captive*. And indeed almost the whole Prophecy of *Jeremy*,

my, and his Book of *Lamentations*, are little else but a perpetual Humiliation and Mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to be coming upon them.

We reade likewise of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*, how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man, saith *St. Peter*, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.

Holy *David* also, upon all occasions, testifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw committed by others, and was so affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them:

- Psal.* 119. Rivers of tears, says he, run down mine
 36. eyes, because men keep not thy Law: And
 v. 53. in the same Psalm, Horreur hath taken hold
 of me, because of the wicked which forsake
 v. 158. thy Law: And again, I beheld the transgressours and was grieved, because they kept not thy Word.

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God and mourn, and in the Name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which

which they had been guilty of? *We have* Dan. 9. 5, 7, 8.
sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, upon a solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People? *O my God*, says he, Ezr. 9. 6, 7.
I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our Kings and our Priests, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands, &c.

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinful Land, upon this solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous Aggravations; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath over-spread the Nation, and diffused it self through all Ranks and Degrees of men, *Magistrates, Ministers and People.*
 I shall

I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

I. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, who are far from being examples of vertue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of justice in the Nation, and that Magistrates are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution: As against the profanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the Meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and

an opportunity, which be never fails to take, to steal *the good seed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worse, by lewd and sinful practices, which are unlawful at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for which the Land mourns; and against *Drunkenness*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common, and so impudently committed amongst us: whether they be Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws; and it is hard to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, so frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that severity and impartiality which is necessary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin, which calls so loud to Heaven for Vengeance.

And all this, notwithstanding the Magistrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution against all these

these Crimes, so far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cognifance.

2. The Sins of the *Minifters*, who ferve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whose blood will be required at their hands, if any of them perifh through their fault and neglect. There is no reafon to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithful Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and confcience, remembring the dreadful Account which they muft one Day make to *Him who fhall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how grofly do many of us fail of the faithful difcharge of the fubftantial parts of this high Office? wanting a juft fenfe of the ineflimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Chrift died; taking little or no care to inftitute them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happinefs by an exemplary converfation.

Nay too many among us demean themfelves fo scandaloufly, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrines by leading lives fo directly

ly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed Conversations: hereby exposing them to the craft of Seducers, and rendering them an easie prey to the *Emissaries* of the Church of *Rome*, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better shew of a strict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe those Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themselves and their own Doctrines? When all is said, the life and manners of the Preacher are the best eloquence, and have that dint and power of perswasion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who so lives as he speaks, does, as it is said of our Blessed Saviour, *Speaks as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: Not as the Scribes*; whose words, notwithstanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, because, as our Saviour tells us of them, *they said, but did not*; their Lives were not answerable to their

their Doctrines: Whereas our Blessed Saviour therefore *spoke as never man spake*, because he liv'd as never man liv'd; so innocent, so useful, so exemplary a life: *He was holy, harmles, and undefil'd*: He *did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips*: He *fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good*. This was that which made Him so powerful a *Preacher of Righteousness*; and we must necessarily fall so much short of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our *Sermons*, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our *Lives*. Such a Preacher, and such a practice as that of our Blessed Saviour was, is every way fitted to reprove, and persuade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blasphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by those, who, above all others, are most nearly concern'd to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our Religion and Church are beset and endanger'd on every side; by the rude assaults
of

of Infidelity, and by the cunning Arts of seducing Spirits, and by our own intestine Heats and Divisions: And it can never be sufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of bloud, that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of Men in a holy Faith, and in the resolution of a good Life, should, for want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needless Differences about lesser things, have so great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of Men either to downright Infidelity, or to a careless neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God justly expostulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the Jews? *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it so; and what will ye doe in the end thereof?* When they who are the Pastors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that pass, that the generality of the People sit down contented with the worst state of things,
and

JER. 5. 30,
31.

and are become almost indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of these things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it ?*

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it must begin at the House of God ; and they who are the Ministers of Religion must lead on this work, and be more careful and conscientious in the discharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. Else, what shall we say when God shall challenge us, as he once did the Pastors of the *Jewish Church*, by his Prophet, saying, *Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautiful Flock ? what wilt thou say when he shall punish thee ?*

Jer. 13. 20,
21.

3. The Sins of the *People* ; amongst whom there is almost an universal corruption and depravation of Manners ; insomuch that Impiety and Vice seem to have over-spread the face of the Nation ; so that we may take up that sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Israel*, and apply it to our selves ; that we are a *sinful Nation*, a
Isai. 1. 4, 5. *People laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers ;*

doers ; that *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint ; and that from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.*

We may justly stand amaz'd to consider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day ; to think, how long he hath born with us and *suffered our manners* ; our open Profaneness, and Infidelity ; our great Immoralities, and gross Hypocrisy ; our insolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and sordid ends : And, which is the most melancholy consideration of all the rest, we seem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongst us to save us.

And then if we consider further our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation : Our incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God which we have seen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very severe and terrible manner been inflicted upon these Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants*
Y *thereof*

thereof might learn righteousness: Our insensibleness of the Hand of God, so visible in his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewise whom He hath so signally honour'd in making them the happy Means and Instruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only express'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a most unnatural Conspiracy against Them with the greatest Enemies not only to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the Reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law established; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with *Ezra*, And *Ezra 9. 6.* *now, O our God, what shall we say unto thee after this? And may not God likewise say to us, as He did more than once to the Jews? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*

Thirdly, We should likewise, upon this Day, earnestly deprecate God's displeasure

pleasure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us ; and that He would be entreated by us at last to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn days of Fasting and Prayer ; and this God expressly enjoins : *Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sanctifie a Fast, call a solemn Assembly ; gather the People, sanctifie the Congregation, assemble the Elders, &c. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them : Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God ?* Joel 2. 15, 16, 17.

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments, God promiseth a gracious answer ; for so it immediately follows : *Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.* Ver. 18.

And thus likewise Daniel, when he set his face to seek the Lord God, by prayer

Ver. 16, 17,
18, 19.

prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People, and beg of Him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them: O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City Jerusalem, thy Holy Mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers, Jerusalem and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; deferr not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.

And thus also should We, upon this Solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which

we

we so righteously have deserv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly expos'd us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our Righteousness, but for his great Mercy; for his own Name's sake, and because we are his People and are called by his Name, and because his Holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the Prayers of his Servants and their Supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

Fourthly, We should likewise, upon this Day, pour out our most earnest Supplications to Almighty God, for the preservation of Their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the prosperity and establishment of Their Government, and for the good Success of Their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since His *Majesty*, with so many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is engaged in so necessary an Undertaking for the Common good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of Their respective Rights: We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious

a Cause; against the common Invader and Oppressor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And that of his infinite Goodness He would be graciously pleased to take the Person of our *Sovereign Lord* the *King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would secure his precious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open Violence: That He would give his Angels charge over him, and cover his Head in the day of Battel, and crown it with Victory over his Enemies, and restore Him to us again in safety.

And that He would likewise preserve and direct the *Queen's Majesty*, in whose hands the Administration of the Government is at present so happily plac'd: That He would give Her Wisdom and Resolution for such a Time as this, and support and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And, Lastly, That He would bless them Both with a long Life, and a peacefull and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

Fifthly, Our Fasting and Humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms
and

and Charity to the poor and needy :
 And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, *break off our sins* Dan. 4. 27.
by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquillity : Hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquillity and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruine of a sinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of peace towards them : For so he promiseth to the *Jews* upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to Him, which are always accompanied with Charity to the Poor : *For I know the thoughts which I* Jer. 29. 11,
think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts 12. 13.
of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end : Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you : And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation,

tion, and of our pious Princes, who are so ready to every good work, and such bright and shining Examples in this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite Mercy and Goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; to be free from Persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the Poor is a great security to us in times of evil: So *David* assures us, speaking of the *Righteous* or *Charitable* Man; *He shall not, says he, be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he shall be satisfied.*

And

And so likewise in Times of publick Distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation hath many times prov'd its best safeguard and shield: *It shall fight for thee, saith the Son of Sirach, speaking of the Charity of Alms, against thine Enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but We of this Nation, by the great Mercy and Goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor, I say, not only to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many

ny Ages: Of whom it may be said as
 Job 41.33, *Job doth of the Leviathan, Upon the*
 34. *earth there is not his like: I am glad I*
cannot apply what immediately follows,
That he is made without fear; but surely
the next words are apposite enough, He
beholdeth all high things, and is King of
all the children of pride: And yet He
that is higher than the highest, even He
that sitteth in the Heavens doth laugh
at him, for He seeth that his Day is
coming.

To conclude this *Particular*; If we
 would have our Prayers ascend up to
 Heaven, and find acceptance there, our
 Alms must go along with them: So the
 Angel intimates when he says to Corne-
 lius, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are gone*
 Acts 10. 4. *up for a memorial before God: Thy Pray-*
ers and thine Alms; they must go to-
gether if we desire that our Prayers
should be effectual. And the Prophet
Isaiah, speaking of the Fast which God
hath chosen, and which is acceptable to
Him, makes Charity and Alms a most
essential part of it: Is it not, says he,
 Isa. 58. 7, 9. *to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that*
thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy
house; when thou seest the naked that
thou cover him, and that thou hide not
thy

thy self from thine own flesh ? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.

Sixthly and Lastly, We should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. For in this Repentance doth mainly consist : This is the proper fruit and effect of all our Humiliation and good Resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future ; more pious and devout towards God, more sober and chaste with regard to our selves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men : In a word, more innocent, more useful, and more holy in all manner of conversation.

And without this, all our Fasting and Humiliation, our most earnest Prayers and Supplications, will signifie nothing : All our Sorrow and Tears will be but as water spilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own Souls, or to preserve *this untoward Generation, this crooked and perverse Nation*, from ruin and destruction. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the only way to appease and reconcile Him to a sinful People : *If my People which is* ^{2 Chron. 7.} *called* ^{14.}

called by my Name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways : Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their Land.

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, Zech.8.19. *to turn us from our wicked ways ; God would then turn away his anger from us ; and, as he promised to the Jews by the Prophet Zachary, He would turn these our Monthly Fasts into joy, and gladness, and cheerful Feasts ; as he hath in a great measure already done, Blessed be his great and glorious Name.*

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God should deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against Him without fear all the days of our Lives ? To what purpose should the Providence of God take so much care to preserve our Religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our Lives ? When it serves most of us, only to talk of it ; and too many amongst us, to talk against it ; to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can we say, why the Kingdom of God should not be taken

taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be persuaded to practise, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worst: So God tells the *Prophet* concerning them: *They* ^{Ezek. 33.} *come unto thee, as the People cometh; and* ^{31.} *they sit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very mis-becoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the Great and Glorious *Majesty of Heaven and Earth,*

Earth, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steady attention, without wandering, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God*, in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day;
and

and to *turn to Him that hath smitten us*, lest we provoke him to *punish us yet seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for our sins*, and for our impenitency in them, till at last *He make our plagues wonderfull*.

To conclude ; Let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more ; that which I see not, teach thou me ; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh ! that there were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ* : To whom with thee, O *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever, *Amen*.

That

That God is the only Happiness of Man.

I N A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N,

A T

W H I T E - H A L L,

March the 20th 169 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Z

That God is the only Happy
LIFE of MAN.

IN A

SERMON

preached before the

CHURCH

AT

WINTHROP

ON THE 10TH DAY OF

That God is the only Happiness of Man.

PSALM Lxxliij. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

THE design of this *Psalm* is to vindicate the Goodness and Justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous estate of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain Truth, that God is good to good men: *Of a* Ver. 1. *truth God is good, to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.*

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptation to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good men exposed to great calamities in this life; as if God either neglected humane affairs, or had a greater kindness for the workers of iniquity than for pious and good men: *As for me, my foot had well-nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

Ver. 2.

Ver. 10.

This, he says, was a very great stumbling-block to good men, and tempted them to doubt of the Providence of God: *Therefore his People return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; and they say, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High?* This Sentence is somewhat obscurely rendred in our *Translation*, so as to make the sence of it difficult; which is plainly this: *Therefore his people return hither*; that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatness of their affliction, and in the bitterness of their soul, to question God's knowledge and care of humane affairs.

Behold,

Behold, say they, these are the ungod- Ver. 12.
ly, and yet they are the prosperous in the
world, they increase in riches : To what
purpose then is it for any man to be Re-
ligious and Vertuous ? Verily, I have Ver. 13.
cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my
hands in innocency : In vain have I endea-
voured after purity of heart and inno-
cency of life, since so little good comes
of it ; nay, so far from that, that I have
been in continual trouble and affliction :
All the day long have I been plagued, and Ver. 14.
chastned every morning.

Such thoughts as these often came in-
 to his mind, and gave him great trou-
 ble and disquiet : But he presently cor-
 rects himself : *If I say I will speak thus,* Ver. 15.
I should offend against the generation of
thy Children ; that is, I should go against
 the sense of all pious and good men, who
 have always believed the Providence of
 God notwithstanding this Objection :
 Which at last he tells us he had raised
 on purpose to try if he could find the
 solution of it : *I thought to know this,* Ver. 16.
which was grievous in mine eyes : And
 then he resolves all into the unsearchable
 Wisdom of the Divine Providence, which
 if we fully understood from first to last,
 we should see good reason to be satisfied
 Z 3 with

with the equity of it : *When I go into the*
 Ver. 17, 18. *Sanctuary of God, then shall I understand*
the end of these men? How thou didst set
them in slippery places, &c. This satis-
 fied him, that when-ever the secret de-
 sign of God's Providence should be un-
 folded, whether in this World or the o-
 ther, how strange and cross soever things
 might seem to be at present, yet in the
 issue and conclusion it would appear,
 that neither are bad men so happy, nor
 good men so miserable, as at present they
 may seem to be.

So that upon a full debate of this mat-
 ter, the *Psalmist* concludes, that these
 Objections against Providence do spring
 from our ignorance, and short and imper-
 fect view of things; whereas if we saw the
 whole design from beginning to end, it
 would appear to be very reasonable and
 regular. *Thus my heart was grieved; so*
 Ver. 21. *foolish was I and ignorant, and as a beast*
before thee. And in regard to himself, he
 tells us, that he saw great reason to ac-
 knowledge God's tender care over him
 in particular, and that he could find no
 security or comfort for himself, but in
 God alone: *Nevertheless I am continually*
 Ver. 23. *with thee; thou hast bolden me by thy right*
hand: Thou shalt guide me with thy coun-
sel,

sel, and afterwards receive me to glory; as if he had said, I am sensible of thy constant presence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance and direction, not doubting but that my present troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious issue.

And at last he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty consolation which he found in the firm belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as the great stay and support of his Soul in the worst condition that could befall him; in the words of the *Text*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* If a man were to chuse a happiness for himself, and were to ransack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his search and enquiry he would at last fix upon God as the chief happiness of man, and the true and only rest and center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the *Text*, *That nothing in the world but God can make man happy: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

That Man of himself is not sufficient for his own happiness, is evident upon many accounts: Because he is liable to

so many evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent, nor remedy : He is full of wants which he cannot supply ; compassed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redress : He is obnoxious to dangers which he must always fear, because he can never sufficiently provide against them.

Consider Man by himself, and from under the conduct and protection of a superior and more powerful Being, and he is in a most disconsolate and forlorn condition : Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be disappointed of every thing that he hopes for : He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the justest cause of his grief is that he cannot help it ; for if he could, instead of grieving for it, he would help it : He cannot refrain from desiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, because they are out of his power ; and it troubles him both that they are so, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

Thus man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain ; courting happiness in a thousand shapes, and the faster

faster he follows it, the swifter it flies from him. Almost every thing promisseth happiness to us at a distance, such a step of Honour, such a pitch of Estate, such a Fortune or Match for a Child; But when we come nearer to it, either we fall short of it, or it falls short of our expectation; and it is hard to say which of these is the greatest disappointment. Our hopes are usually bigger than enjoyment can satisfy, and an evil long fear'd, besides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troublesome than the evil it self when it comes.

In a word, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. He comes into the world naked and unarm'd, and from himself more destitute of the natural means of his security and support than any other Creature whatsoever, as it were on purpose to shew that he is more peculiarly the care of a Superior Providence: And as man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity; so God in great Wisdom hath so order'd things, that none of the other Creatures should have so much need of Him, and so much reason to acknowledge their necessary dependance upon him. So that the words of
David

Pfal. 22. 9,
30, 11.

David are the very sense and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependence upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: *Thou art he,* says *David* there to God, *that tookest me out of the womb, thou madest me to hope,* or thou didst keep me in safety, *when I was upon my mother's breasts: I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble is near: Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far from any of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.*

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many mischiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives; and, without the Providence of God, continually insecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life itself: So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arriv'd at that state, and how we have continued in it so long, considering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us: That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when so many hands have been lifted up against us,

us, and ſo many ſtrokes levell'd at us, we have eſcaped ſo free, and with ſo few marks and ſcars upon us: That when we are beſieged with ſo many dangers, and ſo many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do ſo many ways lie open, we ſhould yet hold out *twenty, forty, ſixty* years, and ſome of us perhaps longer, and do ſtill ſtand at the mark untouch'd, at leaſt not dangerously wounded by any of them: And conſidering likewise this fearful and wonderful frame of a humane Body, this infinitely complicated Engine; in which, to the due performance of the ſeveral functions and offices of life, ſo many ſtrings and ſprings, ſo many receptacles and channels are neceſſary, and all in their right frame and order; and in which, beſides the infinite imperceptible and ſecret ways of mortality, there are ſo many ſlucæ and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, though we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day ſince we were born: I ſay, conſidering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of humane Life, which is ſet in ſo ſlippery a place,

a place, that we still continue in the land of the living, we cannot ascribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our soul in life, and suffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the same merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilst we continue in life we have any comfortable possession and enjoyment of our selves and of that which makes us men, I mean our Reason and Understanding: That our Imagination is not let loose upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: That every day we do not fall into frenzy and distraction, which next to wickedness and vice is the forest calamity, and saddest disguise of humane Nature: I say, next to wickedness and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madness not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and necessary causes, such as are in a great measure out of our power; so that we are perpetually liable to it, from any secret and sudden disorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Disease, or the vehement transport of any Passion.

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Now if things were under no government, what could hinder so many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another? like the calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had set about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be secure of no fort, no degree of happiness in this World; no not for one moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this present life: For God and another World stand and fall together: Without *Him* there can be no Life after this; and if our hopes of happiness were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings in this lower World would certainly be the most miserable.

I cannot say that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to support and comfort him against the fear of that danger. For the Nature of Man, consider'd by it self, is plainly insufficient

sufficient for its own happiness ; so that we must necessarily look abroad, and seek for it somewhere else : And who can shew us that good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of humane Nature? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following Properties :

First, It must be an All-sufficient good.

Secondly, It must be perfect goodness.

Thirdly, It must be firm and unchangeable in it self.

Fourthly, It must be such a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.

Fifthly, It must be eternal.

Sixthly, It must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life.

Lastly, It must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquillity to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy : And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to
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be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supreme Good; as I shall endeavour, in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, *That God is the only happiness of Man.*

First, God is an All-sufficient Good. I. And this does import *two* things; Wisdom to contrive our happiness, and Power to effect it; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wise* to design and contrive our happiness; because he knows what Happiness is, and how to frame us so as to be capable of the happiness he designs for us; and how to order and dispose all other things so, as that they shall be no hindrance and impediment to it.

He perfectly understands all the possibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to supply them; all our hopes and desires, and how to satisfy them: He fore-sees all the dangers and evils which threaten us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit;
or

or if he permit them to come, how to support us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the last issue and result of things.

His Wisdom cannot be surprized by any accident which he did not fore-see, and which he is not sufficiently provided against. The wisdom of men is but short and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and mistakes: In many cases men know not what is safest and best for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce most to their happiness: Nay it often happens that those very means which the wisest men chuse for their security do prove the occasions of their ruine, and they are thrown down by those very ways whereby they thought to raise and to establish themselves.

Especially if God breathe upon the Counsels of men, how are their designs blasted? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepest contrivances, and *snared in the work of their own hands*? When *it is of the Lord*, the wisdom of the greatest *Politicians* is turned into foolishness: For *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord*.

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But the Divine Wisdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby secur'd against all possibility of error and mistake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the use and application of them to any of his purposes: So that none of his designs of love and mercy to the Sons of men can miscarry for want of good contrivance, or wise conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wise* to contrive our happiness, so is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obstacles and impediments of it. We may understand many times what would conduce to our happiness, but may not be able to compass it; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God: Many things are impossible with us, but *with God all things are possible*. For He is the Fountain and Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly subject and subordinate: He can do all things at once, and in an instant, and with the greatest ease; and no created Power can put any difficulty in his way,

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much less make any effectual resistance; because Omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our side, who can be against us? We may safely *commit our Souls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power.* Though all Creatures should fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-sufficiency for our supply; and may say with the Prophet, *Though the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither Fruit be in the Vine; though the labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no meat; though the Flock should be cut off from the Fold, and there should be no Herd in the Stalls; yet would I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

- II. Secondly, As God is an All-sufficient Good, so He is perfect Goodness. He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his Power and Wisdom for our good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being so but our selves. Such

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is his goodness, that *he would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*: And when we have provoked him by our ſins, *he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance*: For *he delighteth not in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live*. So that if any of us be miſerable, it is our own choice; if we periſh, our deſtruction is of our ſelves: For as the *Wiſeman*, in one of the *Apocryphal Books*, ſays excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living*: But *men ſeek death in the error of their life, and pull deſtruction upon themſelves, with the works of their own hands*.

So great is the goodness of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to our happineſs. He deſign'd it for us at firſt, and to that end he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience of the firſt Parents of mankind, and were miſerably bruited and maimed by their

fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to restore us to a new capacity of happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our nature, and in our stead; and thereby to become a *Propitiation for the sins of the whole World*, and the *Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him*. And he hath likewise promised to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, as the necessary conditions of our eternal Salvation.

- III. *Thirdly*, God is also a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithstanding his infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, we might be miserable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happiness which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greatest aggravations of misery is to fall from happiness, to have been once happy and afterwards to cease to be so: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cause of our happiness could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwise than powerful, and wise, and good, all our hopes of happiness would be shaken, and would fall to the ground.
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But the Divine nature is not ſubject to any change: As he is *the Father of lights*, and *the Author of every good and perfect gift*, ſo *with him is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*. All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reaſon, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

Fourthly, God is ſuch a good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; becauſe we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who ſhall ſeparate us*, ſaith the *Apoſtle*, *from the love of God? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword?* We may be ſtripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all theſe can ſeparate us from God: *I am perſuaded*, *as the Apoſtle goes on with great triumph,* *that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor heighth,*

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Rom. 8. 35.

v. 38, 39.

nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Nor any other Creature: Here is a sufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and *that is Sin*, which is none of God's *Creatures*, but our own: *This* indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of Him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder: the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best friends, and banish'd from all our acquaintance; but men can send us no whither from the presence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermost parts of the Earth.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, God is an eternal God: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless duration, must have a happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us happy, because we shall abide and remain after it: When a very few years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from them, *But God is from everlasting to everlasting: He is the same, and his years fail not: Therefore well might David fix his happiness upon God alone, and say, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee: When my heart faileth, and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

V.

Sixthly, God is able to support and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and so long as *that remains unwounded, the spirit of a man can bear his infirmities.* God is intimate to our

VI.

Souls, and hath secret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bitterest afflictions and sharpest sufferings: He can enable us by his Grace *to possess our souls in patience*, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can give us *peace and joy in believing*: When we are *persecuted, afflicted, and tormented*, He can give us that ravishing sight of the Glories of another World, that stedfast assurance of a future Blessedness, as shall quite extinguish all sense of present sufferings: How did many of the primitive *Christian Martyrs*, in the midst of their torments, and under the very pangs of death *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*?

There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, and of bodily pains and sufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to trust to but *Him* only: And in the greatest Evils that can befall us in this life, He is a sure refuge and sanctuary; and to repeat the words of the *Psalmist* after the *Text*, *When our heart fails, and our strength fails, God is the strength*

strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.

Now what would any of us do in such a Case, if it were not for God? Humane nature is liable to desperate straits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition, as to be destitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God they would not know which way to turn themselves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable considerations under their present anguish.

All men naturally resort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the most profane and Atheistical, when they are destitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleasure in fools*; in those who neglect and despise him in their prosperity, though they owe that also entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but *in their affliction they will seek him early*:

early : Then they will cry, Lord, Lord ; but he will say to them in that day, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.

Here will be the great unhappiness of such persons, that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns : And at the same time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for mercy and forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it : *Then, those terrible threatenings of God's Word will come to their minds ; Because I called, and ye refused ;*

Prov. 1. 24, *I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded : But ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof ; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you : Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof : Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their*

own devices : The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. To which I will add that terrible Passage in the Prophet, concerning the perverse and obstinate Jews, They are a People of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour. And men are miserable Creatures indeed, when God their Maker doth abandon them, and hath so far hardened his heart against them, that he can have no pity and compassion for them.

Seventhly and Lastly, Which is consequent upon all the rest, God is such a Good as can give perfect rest and tranquillity to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himself so, what-ever cause he may have to think so. Now what in reason can give us disquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the best ; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been said of Him? Why should not our minds
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VII.

be in perfect repose, when we are secure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us so, if we be not wanting to our selves, and by our wilful obstinacy and rebellion against him do not oppose and frustrate this design?

If a considerate Man were permitted to his own choice, to wish the greatest good to himself that he could possibly devise; after he had searched Heaven and Earth, the result of all his wishes would be that there were just such a Being as we must necessarily conceive God to be: Nor would he chuse any other Friend or Benefactor; any other Protector for himself or Governor for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his enquiry he would come to the *Psalmist's* conclusion here in the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to seek for happiness elsewhere, but this proceeds from want of due consideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly cast up and adjusted, we shall at last settle

settle in *David's* resolution of that great Question, *What is the chief Good of man?* Psal. 4. 6, 7, 8. *There be many, says he, that say, Who will shew us any good?* That is, Men are generally inquisitive after happiness, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: Most men place it in the present enjoyments of this World, but *David* for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully convinc'd that the happiness of Man does consist: *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increased.* The great joy of the men of this World is in a plentiful Harvest, and the abundance of the good things of this life: But *David* had found that which gave more joy and gladness to his heart, the favour of God and the *light of his countenance*: This gave perfect rest and tranquillity to his mind, so that he needed not to enquire any further: For so it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and rest; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety*: The Hebrew word signifies *confidence* or *security*: Here, and no-where else, his mind found rest, and was in perfect ease and security.

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I shall now only make two or three *Inferences* from this Discourse, and so conclude.

First, This plainly shews us the great unreasonableness and folly of *Atheism*, which would banish the belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is most impious in respect of God, so is it most malicious to Men; because it strikes at the very foundation of our happiness, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no God, Man would evidently be the most unhappy of all other Beings here below; because his unhappiness would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which distinguishes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reason and Understanding: And he would be so much more miserable than the Beasts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger prospect of future evils; a quicker apprehension, and a deeper and more lasting resentment of them.

So that if any man could see reason to stagger his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am sure there is infinite reason to the contrary; yet the belief of these things is so much for the interest, and comfort, and happiness of Mankind,
that

that a Wise man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle so favourable to his quiet, and that does so exactly answer all the natural desires and hopes and fears of Men, and is so equally calculated both for our comfort in this World, and for our happiness in the other. For when a man's thoughts have ranged and wandered as far as they can, his mind can find no rest, no probable foundation of happiness but God only; no other reasonable, no nor tolerable *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things for a Wise man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmly believed, and truly lived up to by an answerable practice, was ever able to support the generality of Mankind, and to minister true consolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not something real in the Principles of Religion, it is impossible that they should have so remarkable and so regular an effect to support our minds in every condition, upon so great a number of persons of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant Places, and
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in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us : I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reason be ascribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform cause proportionable to so great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost evidence that any thing is capable of, and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavils and Objections against it ; but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other interest but to find out Truth ; and when he hath found it, to yield to it : If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any vertue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an impossibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient reason

reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this ; That he would offer some other *Principles* ; that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World ; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do : And till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded, and ought not to be disturbed and put out of Possession. And this, I think, puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

Secondly, From what hath been said, in the foregoing Discourse, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our trust and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to address all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.*

But now, according to the Doctrine and

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Practice of the Church of Rome, the *Psalmist* here puts a very odd and strange Question, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they must give a quite different answer from what the *Psalmist* plainly intended; namely, that God was the sole Object of his hope and trust, and that upon Him alone he relied as his only comfort and happiness: But to this Assertion of the *Psalmist* the Church of Rome can by no means agree: They understand this matter much better than the *Psalmist* did; namely, that besides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repose great trust and confidence, and to whom also we are to address solemn Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our Sins, for the increase of our Graces, and for eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occasions, against all sorts of dangers and diseases, for all Graces and Vertues, and, in a word, for all temporal, spiritual, and eternal Blessings; to whom we may apply our selves, without troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is God blessed for evermore, by presuming upon every

every occasion to make our immediate Addreſſes to Him: For as they would make us believe, though *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the bleſſed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not only intercede with God for us for all ſorts of Bleſſings, but we may make direct and immediate Addreſſes to them to beſtow theſe Bleſſings upon us: For ſo they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from ſeveral of their *Prayers* in their moſt publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed ſain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by theſe direct and immediate Addreſſes to Angels and Saints to beſtow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleaſed to intercede with God for theſe Bleſſings to be beſtowed upon them by their Mediation: But if they mean no more, why do they ſay more than they mean? Why do they uſe ſuch expreſſions as to the common ſenſe and underſtanding of Mankind do ſignifie a great deal more than they ſay they mean; ſuch expreſſions, as they themſelves do acknowledge, if they be underſtood according to the moſt obvious ſenſe of the words,

would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Especially when they know, that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account; and since to clear themselves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they justly lie under the suspicion of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this matter to be true, and that by these expressions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but the solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: Yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the *Office* of the only *Mediator* between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus: But let them not deceive themselves, *God is not mocked: The Lord our God is a jealous God, and He will not give his Glory to another.*

I have not yet instanced in the grossest part of their *Superstition*, not to say downright Idolatry, in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant Worship of the *blessed Virgin* and *Mother of our Lord*; whom they blasphemously call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom, by a new style, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they

they think to dignifie with the *modish* Title of *our Lady*; as if that could be any addition of honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *blessed among Women*: Who, if she know any thing of the follies of Her Worshippers here below, with what disdain and indignation, do we think She hears those infinite *Prayers* that are made to Her, and that *Sacriligious* Worship which is given Her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Christ? As if there were *none in Heaven but She*, nor *any thing upon Earth* to be worshiped in comparison of *Her Image*.

Nay, so far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: So far, I say, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions*, called *Our Lady's Psalter*, not only to apply to Her some part of this *Psalms*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to Israel, to them that worship his Blessed Mother?* But they

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have likewise profanely *burlesqued*, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole *Book of Psalms*, applying to *Her* almost the highest things that are there said concerning God and our *Blessed Saviour*. *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, and be ye horribly astonished*, to see the best and wisest Religion in the World transform'd into Superstition and Folly; and to see the most learned Persons in that Communion set themselves in good earnest to justify all these follies and absurdities by a grave and groundless pretence to *Infallibility*.

3. *Thirdly and Lastly*, This shews us how necessary the favour of God is to every man's happiness: And there is but one way to gain his friendship and favour, by becoming holy and good as He is: Then may we rejoice and glory in God, as the *Psalmist* here does, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee*. A wicked Man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great reason to do so: *For he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity*. When by sin we depart from
God,

God, we forsake our own happiness: *Salvation is far from the wicked, says David.* Psal. 119. *vid.* And again, a little after the *Text*, *They that are far from thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw near to God.* Now by Holiness and Goodness we draw near to *Him*, who alone can make us happy.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind there should be a God, because we cannot possibly be happy without Him: But then it is no man's interest to be wicked, because thereby we make *Him* our Enemy in whose favour is life, and upon whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our Happiness, we must be sure to make Him our Friend; and then we may promise to our selves all those advantages which the Friendship of so great and powerful a Patron can give us: And there is but one way to establish a firm Friendship between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my friends, saith our Blessed Lord, if ye do whatsoever I command you: This is the love of God, saith St. John, that we keep his commandments:*

mandments: And to love God is the way to be made partakers of those glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man: Which God of his infinite Goodness grant we may all at last be made partakers of, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*; To whom with Thee, O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

*A Thanksgiving-Sermon for
the late Victory at Sea.*

I N A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
King and Queen

A T
WHITE-HALL,

Octob. the 27th. 1692.

the following persons for

the year 1800, viz.

JOHN

JOHN

JOHN

JOHN

A Thanksgiving - Sermon for the late Victory at Sea.

JER. ix. 23, 24.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

THese words are a message from God sent by his Prophet to the People of the Jews, who trusted in their own *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*, for their safety and preservation from

from that Destruction which, in the former part of this Chapter, God had threaten'd to bring upon them by the King of Babylon. To take them off from this vain confidence is this Message sent to them, *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

In the handling of these Words, I shall abstract from the particular Occasion of them, and only consider the general Truth contained in them: Which I shall do under these two Heads.

First, What we are not to glory in: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.

Secondly, What it is that is matter of true glory: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

I. What

I. *What we are not to glory in.* The Text instanceth in three things which are the great Idols of mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themselves and to place their confidence, namely, *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*. I shall consider these severally, and shew how little reason there is to glory in any of them.

I.

I. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* This may comprehend both humane Knowledge, and likewise prudence in the management of affairs. We will suppose both these to be intended here by the name of *Wisdom*, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, that is, neither in the largeness and compass of his Knowledge and Understanding, nor in his skill and dexterity in the contrivance and conduct of humane Affairs; and that for these two reasons.

I.

First, Because the highest pitch of humane Knowledge and Wisdom is very imperfect.

Secondly, Because when Knowledge and Wisdom are with much difficulty in any competent measure attained, how easily are they lost?

First, *The highest pitch of humane knowledge and wisdom is very imperfect.* Our
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Ignorance doth vastly exceed our Knowledge at the best. Wisdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attain'd, but perfection in it utterly to be despair'd of. Where is there to be found so strong and sound a Head, as hath no soft place; so perfect, so clear an understanding as hath no flaw, no dark Water in it? How hard a matter is it to be truly wise? And yet there are so many pretenders to wisdom as would almost tempt a man to think that nothing is easier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal distribution of other things, as of health and strength, of power and riches: But if we will trust the judgment of most men concerning themselves, nothing is more equally shar'd among mankind than a good degree of wisdom and understanding. Many will grant others to be superiour to them in other gifts of Nature, as in bodily strength and stature; and in the gifts of Fortune, as in riches and honour; because the difference between one man and another in these qualities is many times so gross and palpable, that no body hath the face to deny it: But very few in comparison, unless it be in mere complement and civility, will yield others to be wiser than themselves; and

and yet the difference in this also is for the most part very visible to every body but themselves.

So that true Wisdom is a thing very extraordinary. Happy are they that have it: And, next to them, not those many that think they have it, but those few that are sensible of their own defects and imperfections and know that they have it not.

And among all the kinds of Wisdom none is more nice and difficult, and meets with more frequent disappointments, than that which men are most apt to pride themselves in, I mean *Political* wisdom and prudence; because it depends upon so many contingent Causes, any one of which failing the best laid design breaks and falls in pieces: It depends upon the uncertain wills and fickle humours, the mistaken and mutable interests of men, which are perpetually shifting from one point to another, so that no body knows where to find them: Besides an unaccountable mixture of that which the *Heathen* call'd *Fortune*, but we *Christians* by its true name, the *Providence* of God; which does frequently interpose in humane Affairs, and loves to confound the wisdom of the wise, and to turn their counsels into foolishness.

Of

Of this we have a most remarkable Example in *Achitophel*, of whose wisdom the *Scripture* gives this extraordinary Testimony, That the counsel which he counselled in those days was as if one had enquired at the Oracle of God: Such was all the counsel of *Achitophel* both with *David* and with *Abfalom*. It seems he gave very good counsel also to *Abfalom*, and because he would not follow it was discontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himself: And now who would pride himself in being so very wise as to be able to give the best counsel in the world, and yet so very weak as to make away himself, because he to whom it was given was not wise enough to take it?

The like miscarriages often happen in point of Military skill and prudence. A great *Prince* or *General* is sometimes so very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a Battel; and then at another time, and perhaps in another Element; so rash and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten: As if the two Elements made the difference; and caution were great wisdom at Land, and confidence and presumption great prudence at Sea. But the true reason of these things lies much deeper,

deeper, in the secret Providence of Almighty God, who when he pleases can so govern and over-rule both the understandings and the wills of men, as shall best serve his own wise purpose and design.

And as the highest pitch of humane Wisdom is very imperfect in it self, so is it much more so in comparison with the Divine knowledge and wisdom: Compar'd with this it is mere folly, and less than the understanding and wisdom of a child to that of the wisest man. *The foolishness of God, says St. Paul, is wiser than men,* that is, the least grain of Divine wisdom is infinitely beyond all the wisdom of men: But in opposition to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of men is less than nothing and vanity. Let men design things never so prudently, and make them never so sure, even to the *Popish and French* degree of infallibility; let them reckon upon it as *a Blow that cannot fail*: Yet after all, the counsel of the Lord *that* shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; *for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

And now we may ask the Question which *Job* does, *Where shall wisdom be found,*

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found,

1 Cor. 1. 25.

Job 28. 12.

found, and where is the place of understanding? And we must answer it as he does,

Ch. 28. 12. *It is not to be found in the land of the living: unless it be that one infallible Point of Wisdom to which God directs every man, and of which every man is capable, viz. Religion and the Fear of God,*

Job 28. 28. *Unto man he said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*

Secondly, *When knowledge and wisdom are with great difficulty in any competent measure attain'd, how easily are they lost?* By a disease, by a blow upon the head; by a sudden and violent passion, which may disorder the strongest Brain and confound the clearest Understanding in a moment: Nay even the excess of knowledge and wisdom, especially if attended with pride as too often it is, is very dangerous and does many times border upon distraction and run into madness: Like an *Athletick* constitution and perfect state of health, which is observ'd by *Physicians* to verge upon some dangerous disease, and to be a forerunner of it.

And when a man's Understanding is once craz'd and shatter'd, how are the finest notions and thoughts of the wisest man blunder'd and broken, perplex'd and entan-

entangled : like a puzzled lump of silk, so that the man cannot draw out a thought to any length, but is forc'd to break it off and to begin at another end. Upon all which and many more accounts, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom* which is so very imperfect ; so hard to be attain'd, and yet so easie to be lost.

2. *Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.* Which whether it be meant of natural strength of body, or of military force and power, how weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foil'd by an unequal strength?

2.

If we understand it of the natural strength of men's bodies, how little reason is there to glory in that, in which so many of the Creatures below us do by so many degrees excell us? In that, which may so many ways be lost ; by sickness, by a maime, and by many other external Accidents ; and which however will decay of it self, and by Age sink into infirmity and weakness.

And how little reason is there to glory in that, which is so frequently foil'd by an unequal strength? of which *Goliath* is a famous Instance. When he defied the Host of *Israel*, and would needs have the

matter decided by single Combate, God inspired *David* to accept the Challenge; who though he was no wise comparable to him in strength, and would have been nothing in his hands in close fight, yet God directed him to assail him at a distance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a stone out of a sling, which struck the Giant in the forehead, and brought his unwieldy bulk down to the Earth.

Or if by *might* we understand military force and power, how little likewise is that to be gloried in? considering the uncertain events of War, and how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpose to cast the Victory on the unlikely Side. It is *Solomon's* observation, that such are the interpositions of Divine Providence in humane Affairs, that the Event of things is many times not at all answerable to the power and probability of second Causes: *I returned,* Eccl. 9. 11. *says he, and saw under the Sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battel to the strong.*

And one way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpose to decide the Events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seasons
and

and Weather in favour of one Side : As by sending great Snows, or violent Rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great Design : By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the Conjunction of a powerful Fleet : And by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the Advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late signal Deliverances and Victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the Book of *Job* : Which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this Book to be incomparably the most ancient of all other, and much elder than *Moses* : And yet it is written with as lively a sense of the Providence of God, and as noble Figures and Flights of Eloquence as perhaps any Book extant in the World. The *Passage* I mean is, where God to convince *Job* of his ignorance in the secrets of Nature and Providence poseth him with many hard Questions, and with this amongst the rest,

38.22, *Hast thou entred into the treasures of*
 23. *the Snow? hast thou seen the treasures of*
the Hail? which I have reserv'd against
the time of trouble, against the Day of Bat-
tel and War. The meaning of which is,
 that the Providence of God doth some-
 times interpose to determine the Events
 of War, by governing the Seasons and
 the Weather, and by making the Snows
 and Rains, *the Winds and Storms to fulfil*
his word and to execute his pleasure.

Of this we have a remarkable Instance
 in the defeat of *Sisera's* mighty Army;
 against whom, in the Song of *Deborah*,
 the Stars are said to have fought in their
 courses: The expression is *Poetical*, but
 the plain meaning of it is, that by migh-
 ty and sudden Rains, which the com-
 mon Opinion did ascribe to a special
 influence of the *Planets*, the River of *Ki-*
shon, near which *Sisera's* Army lay, was
 so raised and swollen as to drown the grea-
 test part of that huge Host. For so *De-*
borah explains the fighting of the Stars in
 their courses against *Sisera*: *They fought, says*
she, from Heaven, the Stars in their cour-
ses fought against Sisera, the River of Ki-
shon swept them away: As if the Stars,
 which were supposed by their influence
 to have caused those sudden and extraor-
 dinary

dinary Rains, had set themselves in Bat-
tel-array against *Sifera* and his Army.

Therefore, *let not the mighty man glory in his might*, which is so small in it self, but in opposition to God is weakness and nothing. *The weakness of God*, says St. Paul, *is stronger than men*. All power to do mischief is but impotence, and therefore no matter of boasting: *Why boastest* Psal. 52.1. *thou thy self, thou Tyrant, that thou art able to do mischief? the goodness of God endureth continually*: The goodness of God is too hard for the pride and malice of man, and will last and hold out when that has tir'd and spent it self.

Thirdly, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*. In these, men are apt to pride themselves: even the meanest and poorest spirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good store of that together, how will they swell and strut? as if because they are *rich and increased in goods they wanted nothing*. 3.

But we may do well to consider, that Riches are things without us; not the real Excellencies of our Nature, but the accidental Ornaments of our Fortune. If they descend upon us, they are the Privilege of our Birth, not the effect of our

wisdom and industry ; and those things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own : And if they be the fruit of our own prudent industry, that is no such matter of glorying ; because men of much slower understandings do commonly out-do others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low design of being rich.

At the best, Riches are uncertain. *Charge them*, says St. Paul, *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches* : Men have little reason to pride themselves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not :

PROV. 23. 5. So the wise man speaks of Riches, *Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not ? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards heaven* : He expresses it in such a manner, as if a rich man sate brooding over an Estate till it was fledg'd and had gotten it self wings to fly away.

But that which is the most stinging consideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good Estate ; so that instead of being the means of our happiness it may prove the occasion of
our

our ruin: So the same Wise man observes, *There is a sore evil which I have* Eccl. 5. 13. *seen under the Sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general Pardon, both as to Life and Estate, for no other visible reason but his vast and over-grown Fortune: So Solomon observes to us again, *Such are the ways of every* Prov. 1. 18. *one that is greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.* And why should any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cause of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been prosecuted against a man of a middle Fortune. For these reasons, and a great many more, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

II. I proceed to consider, *What it is* II. *that is matter of true glory? But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

That

That he understandeth and knoweth me:
 Here are two words used to express the thing more fully, *understanding* and *knowledge*; which seem not only to import right apprehensions of the Being, and Providence, and Perfections of God; but likewise a lively sense of these things, and affections suitable to these apprehensions.

That he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that is the Creator, and the Sovereign Governor of the World.

Which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

The best Knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the Knowledge of the Divine Nature and Perfections: especially of those which are most proper for our imitation; and such are those mentioned in the *Text*, *loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness*; which we may distinguish thus: *Loving-kindness* comprehends God's milder Attributes, his *Goodness*, and *Mercy*, and *Patience*: *Judgment* signifies his severer dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his People, or in the remarkable Punishment of great Offenders for example and warning to others: *Righteousness*

ousness seems to be a word of a larger signification, and to denote that universal Rectitude of the Divine Nature which appears in all the Administrations of his Providence here below; for the Text speaks of the Exercise of these Perfections in this World: *which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

Several of the Perfections of the Divine Nature are incommunicable to a Creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be proposed to us for a Pattern; as *self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency; the eternity, and the immensity of the Divine Being; to be the original Cause of all other things, and the Sovereign Governour of the whole World: For God only is sufficient for that; and to be a Match for all the World, a nec pluribus impar, is not a Motto fit for a mortal man.* A Creature may swell with pride till it burst, before it can stretch it self to this pitch of Power and Greatness: It is an insufferable Presumption, and a sottish Ignorance of the necessary Bounds and Limits of our Being, to think to resemble God in these Perfections: This was the Ambition of *Lucifer, to ascend into Heaven, and to be like the most High.*

In

In our imitation of God we must still keep within the station of Creatures ; not affecting an *independency* and *sovereignty* like God, and to be *omnipotent* as he is :
 Job 40. 9. *Hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like Him ? as God himself argues with Job.*

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. God takes pleasure to exercise these Perfections himself, and to see them imitated by us ; and the imitation of these Divine Perfections is our perfection and glory ; in comparison of which all humane *wisdom*, and *power*, and *riches*, are so far from being matter of glory, that they are very despicable and pitiful things : Knowledge and Skill to devise mischief, and power to effect it, are the true Nature and Character of the Devil and his Angels ; those Apostate and accursed Spirits, who in temper and disposition are most contrary to God, who is the Rule and Pattern of all perfection.

I shall only make two *Observations* or *Inferences* from what hath been said, and then apply the whole Discourse to the great Occasion of this Day : And they are these.

First, That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the

the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, That the Nature of God is the true *Idea* and Pattern of Perfection and Happiness.

First, *That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature*: Upon those more especially which to us are most easie and intelligible: such as are those mentioned in the *Text*. And this makes the Knowledge of God, and of these Perfections, to be so useful and so valuable: Because all Religion is founded in right Notions of God, and of his Perfections: Insomuch that Divine Revelation it self does suppose these for its foundation, and can signify nothing to us unless these be first known and believed: For unless we be first firmly persuaded of the Providence of God, and of his particular care of Mankind, why should we suppose that he makes any Revelation of his Will to us? Unless it be first naturally known that God is a God of Truth, what ground is there for the belief of his Word? So that the Principles of *Natural* Religion are the foundation of that which is reveal'd: And therefore nothing can in Reason be admitted to be
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a Revelation from God, which does plainly contradict his essential Perfections.

Upon this *Principle*, a great many *Doctrines* are without more a-do to be rejected, because they do plainly and at first sight contradict the Divine Nature and Perfections. I will give a few *Instances*, instead of many that might be given.

In vertue of this *Principle* I cannot believe, upon the pretended Authority or Infallibility of any Person or Church, that Force is a fit Argument to produce Faith: No man shall ever persuade me, no not the Bishop of *Meaux* with all his Eloquence, that Prisons and Tortures, Dragoons and the Gallies, are proper means to convince the Understanding, and either *Christian* or *Humane* Methods of converting men to the true Religion.

For the same Reason I cannot believe, that God would not have men to understand their publick Prayers, nor the Lessons of Scripture which are read to them: Because a Lesson is something that is to be learnt, and therefore a Lesson that is not to be understood is nonsense; for if it be not understood how can it be learnt?

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As little can I believe, that God who caused the *Holy Scriptures* to be written for the instruction of mankind, did ever intend that *they* should be lock'd up and concealed from the People in an unknown Tongue.

Least of all can I believe that *Doctrine* of the Council of *Trent*, That the saving Efficacy of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the intention of the Priest that administers them: Which is to say, that though the People believe and live never so well, yet they may be damn'd by shoals, and whole Parishes together, at the pleasure of the Priest: And this for no other reason, but because the Priest is so cross and so cruel that he will not intend to save them.

Now can any man believe this, that hath any tolerable Notion either of the Goodness or Justice of God? May we not appeal to God in this, as *Abraham* did in another Case? *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do after this manner: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Much more, to destroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent People should lie at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverse Priest, to be
sav'd

fav'd or damn'd by him as he thinks fit,
*That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge
 of all the Earth do right?* For, to drive
 the argument to the head, if this be to
 do right there is no possibility of doing
 wrong.

Thus in things which are more obscure
 we should govern all our Reasonings con-
 cerning God and Religion by that which
 is clear and unquestionable, and should
 with *Moses* lay down this for a certain
 Principle, *All his ways are judgment, a God
 of truth, and without iniquity, just and right
 is He:* And say with *St. Paul*, *Is there
 then unrighteousness with God? God forbid?*
 And again, *We know that the Judgment of
 God is according to truth.*

2ly, The other *Inference* is this, *That
 the Nature of God is the true Idea and Pat-
 tern of Perfection and Happiness:* And
 therefore nothing but our conformity to
 it can make us happy: And for this rea-
 son, to understand and know God is our
 great excellency and glory, because it is
 necessary to our imitation of *Him* who is
 the best and happiest Being. And so far
 as we are from resembling God, so far
 are we distant from Happiness and the
 true temper of the Blessed. For Good-
 ness is an essential ingredient of Happi-
 ness;

ness; and as without Goodness there can be no true Majesty and Greatness, so neither any true Felicity and Blessedness.

Now Goodness is a generous disposition of mind to diffuse and communicate it self by making others to partake of our Happiness, in such degrees as they are capable: For no Being is so happy as it might be, that hath not the power and the pleasure to make others happy: This surely is the highest pleasure, I had almost said pride, of a great Mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of Happiness in any thing without us. Happiness must be within us; the foundation of it must be laid in the inward frame and disposition of our spirits: And the very same causes and ingredients which make up the Happiness of God must be found in us, though in a much inferiour degree, or we cannot be happy. They understand not the Nature of Happiness, who hope for it upon any other terms: He who is the Authour and Fountain of Happiness cannot convey it to us by any other way, than by planting in us such dispositions of mind as are in truth a kind of participation of the Divine Nature, and by enduing us with such qualities as are the necessary Materials of

Happiness: And a man may as soon be well without Health as happy without Goodness.

If a wicked man were taken up into Heaven, yet if he still continue the same bad man that he was before, *cælum, non animum mutavit*, he may have chang'd the *Climate*, and be gone into a far Country; but because he carries *himself* still along with him, he will still be miserable from himself: Because the man's mind is not chang'd all the while, which would signify a thousand times more to his happiness, than change of place, or of any outward circumstances whatsoever: For a bad man hath a *Fiend* in his own Breast, and the fewel of Hell in his guilty Conscience.

There is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary and essential to Happiness, and *that* is Holiness and Goodness, which is the very Nature of God; and so far as any man departs from this temper, so far he removes himself and runs away from happiness. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to it self: And till this be cur'd, it is as impossible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of

of joint to be at ease; because the man's Spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were to's'd from its Center; and till that be set right, and restored to its proper and natural state, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no rest and peace within himself. *The wicked, saith the Prophet, is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest: There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked: No peace with God, no peace with his own mind; for a bad man is at perpetual Discord and Wars within himself: And hence, as St. James tells us, come Wars and Fightings without us, even from our Lusts which warr in our members.*

And now that I have mention'd *Wars and Fightings without us*, this cannot but bring to mind the great and glorious Occasion of this Day: Which gives us manifold Cause of Praise and Thanksgiving to Almighty God: For several wonderful Mercies and Deliverances; and more particularly, for a most glorious Victory at Sea, vouchsafed to Their *Majesties* Fleet in this last Summer's Expedition.

For several great Mercies and Deliverances: For a wonderful Deliverance indeed, from a sudden *Invasion* design'd upon us by the inveterate and implacable

Enemies of our Peace and Religion; which by the merciful Providence of God was happily and strangely prevented, when it was just upon the point of execution.

Next, for the preservation of our *Gracious Sovereign*, from that horrid and most barbarous Attempt design'd upon his Sacred Person: And from those great and manifold Dangers to which he was exposed in his late tedious Expedition: And for His safe and most welcome Return to us.

And lastly, For a most glorious *Victory at Sea*: The greatest and the cheapest that ever the Sun saw, from his first setting out to run his Course. The Opportunity indeed of this Victory was through the rashness and confidence of our Enemies, by the wise Providence of God, put into our hands: But the improvement of this Opportunity into so great and happy a Victory we owe, under God, to the matchless Conduct and Courage of the Brave *Admiral*, and to the invincible Resolution and Valour of the *Captains* and *Seamen*.

This great Deliverance from the design'd *Invasion*, and this glorious *Victory*, God vouchsaf'd to us *at Home*, whilst His
Sa-

Sacred Majesty was so freely hazarding his Royal Person *abroad*, in the Publick Cause of the Rights and Liberties of almost all *Europe*.

And now what may God justly expect from us, as a meet return for his Goodness to us? What? but that we should *glorifie* Him, first by *offering praise* and thanksgiving; and then, by *ordering our conversation aright*, that he may still delight to *shew us his Salvation*.

God might have stood aloof from us in the Day of our distress, and have said to us, as he once did to the People of *Israel*, so often have I delivered you from the hands of your Enemies, but ye have still provok'd me more and more, *Wherefore I will deliver you no more*: He might have said of us, as he did of the same People, *I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be*: For they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith: Our resolutions and promises of better obedience are not to be trusted; all our Repentance and *Righteousness* are but as the morning cloud, and like the early dew which passeth away: Nay methinks God seems now to say to us, as he did of old to *Jerusalem*, *Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee*. Judg. 10.
13.
Deut. 32.
20.
Jer. 6. 3.

thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.

We are here met together this Day, to pay our Solemn acknowledgments to *the God of our Salvation ; who hath shewed strength with his Arm, and hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart : Even to him that exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth : In Him* will we glory as our sure Refuge and Defence, as our Mighty Deliverer, and the Rock of our Salvation.

And now I have only to entreat your patience a little longer, whilst I apply what hath been discoursed upon this *Text* a little more closely to the Occasion of this Day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And blessed be God for this happy *Occasion* : The greatest *England* ever had, and, in the true consequences of it, perhaps the greatest that *Europe* ever had of Praise and Thanksgiving.

You have heard two sorts of Persons described in the *Text*, by very different Characters : The *One*, that glory in their *Wisdom* and *Might*, and *Riches* : The *other*, that glory in this, that they understand and know God to be the Lord, which
exer-

exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

And we have seen these two *Characters* exemplified, or rather drawn to the Life, in this present Age. We who live in this Western part of *Christendom* have seen a mighty Prince, by the just permission of God, raised up to be a Terrour and Scourge to all his Neighbours: A Prince, who had in perfection all the Advantages mentioned in the former part of the *Text*: And who, in the opinion of many who had been long dazzled with his Splendour and Greatness, hath pass'd for many years, for the most *Politick*, and *Powerful*, and *Richest Monarch* that hath appear'd in these parts of the World, for many Ages:

Who hath govern'd his Affairs by the deepest and steddiest Counsels, and the most refin'd Wisdom of this World: A Prince mighty and powerful in his Preparations for War; formidable for his vast and well disciplin'd Armies, and for his great Naval Force: And who had brought the Art of War almost to that perfection, as to be able to Conquer and do his business without fighting: A Mystery hardly known to former Ages and Generations: And all this Skill and

Strength united under one absolute Will, not hamper'd or bound up by any restraints of Law or Conscience.

A Prince that commands the Estates of all his Subjects, and of all his Conquests; which hath furnish'd him with an almost inexhaustible Treasure and Revenue: And One, who if the World doth not greatly mistake him, hath sufficiently *gloried* in all these Advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not *knowing God to be the Lord, which exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth*; How hath the pride of all his Glory been stain'd by Tyranny and Oppression, by Injustice and Cruelty; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making War upon his Neighbours without Reason, or even colour of Provocation? And this in a more Barbarous manner than the most Barbarous Nations ever did; carrying Fire and Desolation wherefoever he went, and laying wast many and great Cities without necessity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible Rebuke the Providence of God hath given to this mighty Monarch, in the full Carrier of his Fortune and Fury. The consideration

sideration whereof brings to my thoughts those Passages in the *Prophet* concerning old *Babylon*, that standing and perpetual Type of the great Oppressors and Persecutors of God's true Church and Religion :

How is the Oppressor ceased ? the exactor Isa. 14.
*of gold ceased ? He who smote the People in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the Nations in anger is himself persecuted, and none hindreth. The whole Earth is at rest and is quiet, and breaks forth into singing : The grave beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the Captains of the Earth ; it hath raised up from their Thrones all the Kings of the Nations ; all they shall speak and say unto thee, art thou also become weak as we are ? art thou also become like unto us ? how art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning ? How art thou cut down to the ground that didst weaken the Nations ? For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God : I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North, That is, upon Mount Zion, for just so the Psalmist describes it, Beau- Psal. 48.2.
 tiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the North.*

North. Here the King of *Babylon* threatens to take *Jerusalem*, and to demolish the *Temple* where the Congregation of *Israel* met for the Worship of the true God; *I will also sit upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North.* Much in the same Style with the threatnings of Modern *Babylon*, *I will destroy the Reformation, I will extirpate the Northern Herefie.*

And then he goes on, *I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High: Yet thou shalt be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit: They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms; that made the World as a Wilderneck, and destroyed the Cities thereof, and opened not the House of his Prisoners?*

God seems already to have begun this Work, in the late glorious Victory at Sea; and I hope he will cut it short in righteousness. I have sometimes heretofore wondred, Why at the destruction of Modern and Mystical *Babylon* the Scripture should make so express mention of great wailing and lamentation for the loss of

Rev. 18. 17. *Her Ships and Seamen: Little imagining thirty*

thirty years ago, that any of the *Kingdoms* who had *given their power to the Beast* would ever have arrived to that mighty *Naval Force*: But the *Scripture saith nothing in vain*.

Whether, and how far, Success is an Argument of a good Cause, I shall not now debate: But thus much, I think, may safely be affirmed, That the Providence of God doth sometimes, without plain and down-right Miracles, so visibly shew it self, that we cannot without great stupidity and obstinacy refuse to acknowledge it.

I grant, the Cause must first be manifestly just, before Success can be made an Argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: And if the Cause of true Religion, and the necessary defence of it against a false and Idolatrous Worship, be a good Cause, *Ours* is so: And I do not here beg the Question; we have abundantly proved it to the confusion of our Adversaries: If the vindication of the common Liberties of Mankind, against Tyranny and Oppression, be a good Cause, then *Ours* is so: And this needs not to be proved, it is so glaringly evident to all the World. And as our Cause is not like *theirs*, so neither hath *their*
Rock

Rock been like our Rock, our Enemies themselves being Judges.

And yet as bad an Argument as success is of a good Cause, I am sorry to say it, but I am afraid it is true, it is like in the conclusion to prove the best Argument of all other to convince those who have so long pretended Conscience against submission to the present Government.

Meer Success is certainly one of the worst Arguments in the World of a good Cause, and the most improper to satisfy Conscience: And yet we find by experience, that in the issue it is the most successful of all other Arguments; and does in a very odd but effectual way satisfy the Consciences of a great many men by shewing them their Interest.

God has of late visibly made bare his Arm in our behalf, though some are still so blind and obstinate that they will not see it: Like those of whom the Prophet complains, *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at thy People.*

Thus have I represented unto you a mighty *Monarch*, who like a fiery *Comet* hath hung over *Europe* for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made
such

such terrible havock and devastations in this part of the World.

Let us now turn our View to the other part of the *Text* : And behold a greater than he is here : A Prince of a quite different Character, who does *understand and know God to be the Lord, which doth exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth* : And who hath made it the great Study and Endeavour of his life to imitate these Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of humane Nature in this mortal state will admit : I say, a greater than he is here ; who never said or did an insolent thing, but instead of despising his Enemies has upon all occasions encounter'd them with an undaunted Spirit and Resolution.

This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a Check to this mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Nostrils of this great *Leviathan* who has so long had his pastime in the Seas.

But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a Man much better than himself, when he believed Him to have been slain at the *Boyne* : And indeed Death came then as
near

near to him as was possible without killing him : But the merciful Providence of God was pleased to step in for his Preservation, almost by a Miracle : For I do not believe that from the first use of great Guns to *that* Day, any mortal man ever had his shoulder so kindly kiss'd by a Cannon-bullet.

But I will not trespass any further upon that which is the great Ornament of all his other Vertues ; though I have said nothing of Him but what all the World does see and must acknowledge : He is as much above being flatter'd, as it is beneath an honest and a generous mind to flatter.

Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our Salvation : Let us now in the presence of all his People pay our most thankful acknowledgments to him *who is worthy to be praised* ; even to the Lord God of Israel, who alone doth wondrous things : Who giveth Victory unto Kings, and hath preserved our David his Servant from the hurtful Sword.

And let us humbly beseech Almighty God, that he would long preserve to us the invaluable Blessing of our two Excellent Princes ; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels ;

Angels; not to rescue two or three Persons, but almost a whole Nation out of *Sodom*: By saving us I hope at last from our Vices, as well as at first from that Vengeance which was just ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two Sovereign Princes reigning together, and in the same Throne; and yet so intirely one, as perhaps no Nation, no Age can furnish us with a Parallel: Two Princes perfectly united in the same Design of promoting the true Religion, and the Publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and as far as is possible, by repairing the breaches, and healing the Divisions of a miserably distracted Church and Nation: In a Word, Two Princes who are contented to sacrifice Themselves and their whole Time to the care of the Publick: And for the sake of that to deny themselves almost all sort of ease and pleasure: *To deny themselves*, did I say? No, they have wisely and judiciously chosen the truest and highest Pleasure that this World knows, the Pleasure of doing good, and being Benefactors to Mankind. May they have a long and happy Reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in store for Themselves a Happiness without measure, and without

without end, in God's glorious and everlasting Kingdom: For his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

A
S E R M O N

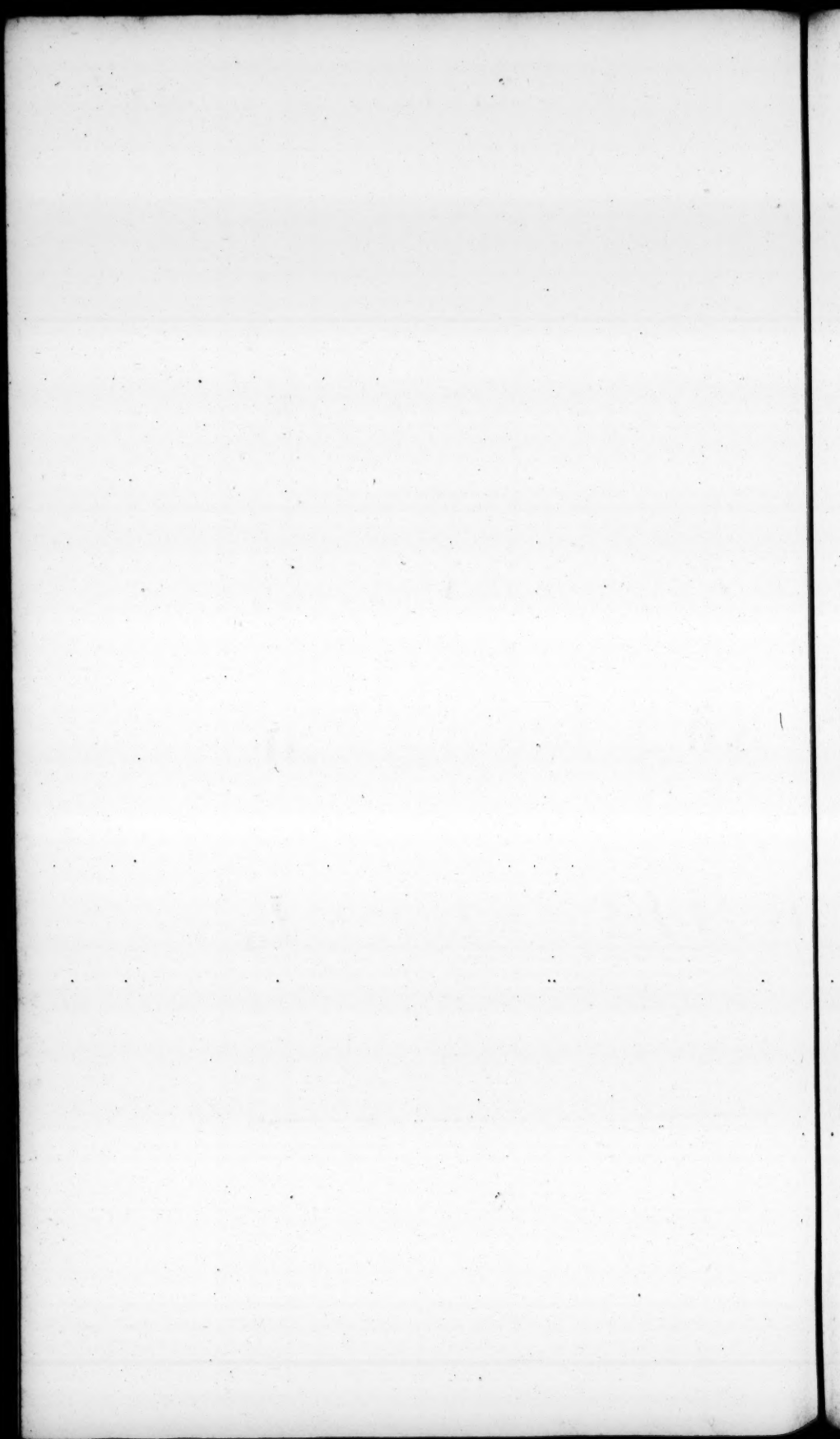
AGAINST
EVIL-SPEAKING,

Preached before the
King and Queen

A T
WHITE - HALL,

Febr. the 25th. 1697.

E c



A Sermon *against* Evil- speaking.

TIT. iiij. 2.

To speak evil of no man.

General Persuatives to Repentance and a good Life, and Invectives against Sin and Wickedness at large, are certainly of good use to recommend Religion and Virtue, and to expose the deformity and danger of a Vicious course. But it must be acknowledged on the other hand, that these general Discourses do not so immediately tend to reform the Lives of men: Because they fall among the Croud, but do not touch the Consciences of particular Persons in so sensible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them

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them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Vertues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Physician, instead of applying particular Remedies to the Distemper of his Patient, should entertain him with a long discourse of Diseases in general, and of the pleasure and advantages of Health; and earnestly persuade him to be well; without taking his particular Disease into consideration, and prescribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great and common disorders of their Lives, and represent their faults to them in such a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-speaking*; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free.

Ecclus. 19. 16. For who is he, saith the Son of Sirach, that hath not offended with his tongue? In

James 3. 2. many things, saith St. James, we offend all: And

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And if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.

But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the same *Apostle* tells us, *If any* Jam. 1.26. *man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.*

For the more distinct handling of this Argument, I shall reduce my Discourse to these *Five Heads*.

First, I shall consider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it consists.

Secondly, I shall consider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To speak evil of no man.*

Thirdly, I shall shew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Causes* and *Effects* of it.

Fourthly, I shall add some further Considerations to dissuade men from it.

Fifthly, I shall give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I. I shall consider *what this Sin or Vice of evil speaking, here forbidden by the Apostle, is*: *μηδὲνα βλασφημεῖν*, not to defame and slander any man, not to hurt his reputation, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is down-right *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and so much the more injurious, because really groundless and undeserved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides: Because it is contrary to that charity and goodness which *Christianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity or some other very good reason for it.

Again,

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Again, It is *Evil-speaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the first Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; because the man that is evil spoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we speak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed seems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling*: The latter is more mean and base, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Back-biting*.

And Lastly, Whether it be done directly and in express terms, or more obscurely and by way of oblique insinuation; whether by way of down-right reproach, or with some crafty preface of commendation: For so it have the effect to defame, the manner of address does not much alter the case: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot less faulty: For many times the deepest Wounds are given by these smother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking questions, *Have you not heard so and so of such a man?* I say no more, I only ask the question: Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to say what*
E e 4 *they*

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they have heard of such a one, are very sorry for it, and do not at all believe it, if you will believe them: And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to suspect the worst.

These and such like Arts, though they may seem to be tenderer and gentler ways of using men's reputation, yet in truth they are the most malicious and effectual methods of Slander; because they insinuate something that is much worse than is said, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a strong belief of something that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what fashion a Slander is dress'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminish his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text*.

- II. II. We will consider *the extent of this Prohibition to speak evil of no man; and the due bounds and limitations of it.* For it is not to be understood absolutely, to forbid us to say any thing concerning others that is bad. This in some cases may be necessary and our duty, and in several cases very fit and reasonable. The Question is, In what Cases by the general

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ral Rules of Scripture and right Reason we are warranted to say the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reason and necessity; as, for the prevention of some great evil, or the procuring of some considerable good to our selves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of *Sirach*, *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other men's lives; and if thou canst without offence reveal them not; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canst conceal them, divulge them not.* Eccl. 19.8.

But because this may not be direction sufficient, I shall instance in some of the principal Cases wherein men are warranted to speak evil of others, and yet in so doing do not offend against this Prohibition in the *Text*.

First, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the person of whom evil is spoken. In such a case we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be so fit for us to use that boldness and freedom, we may reveal his faults

faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other use of this discovery but in order to his amendment. And this is so far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the best testimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindness to give him the opportunity of vindicating himself: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Case the Son of *Sirach* adviseth to reveal men's faults; *Admonish a friend*, *Ecclus. 19.* says he, *it may be he hath not done it; 13, 14, 15.* and if he have done it, that he do it no more: *Admonish a friend*, it may be he hath not said it; and if he have, that he speak it not again: *Admonish a friend*, for many times it is a slander; and believe not every tale.

But then we must take care that this be done out of kindness, and that nothing of our own passion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproofing and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in such a manner as if we did it to shew our *authority* rather than our *charity*. It requires a great deal of address
and

and gentle application so to manage the business of Reproof, as not to irritate and exasperate the person whom we reprove, instead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewise is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witness concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the publick good, or the prevention of some great evil should require it. And then the plain reason of the thing will sufficiently justify a voluntary accusation: otherwise it hath always among well-manner'd People been esteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward Informer concerning the misdemeanours of others. *Magistrates* may sometimes think it fit to give encouragement to such persons, and to set one bad man to catch another, because such men are fittest for such dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidants:

But when a man is call'd to give testimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in such Cases, he is so far from deserving blame for so doing, that it would
be

be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publish the faults of others, in our own necessary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to suffer himself to be defamed to save the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and though a man had never so much goodness, he would first secure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other men's. We are to love our neighbour as our selves; so that the love of our selves is the Rule and Measure of our love to our neighbour: And therefore *first*, otherwise it could not be the Rule. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would rise thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This also is lawful for caution and warning to a third person, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by reposing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or suspicion of his bad qualities:

ties: But even in this case we ought to take great care that the ill character we give of any man be spread no further than is necessary to the good end we designed in it.

Besides these more obvious and remarkable Cases, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary conversation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one friend may not in freedom speak to another of the miscarriage of a third person, where he is secure no ill use will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or speaking ill of others: And the less we do it, though without any malice or design of harm, still the better; because this shews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleasure in them.

These are the usual Cases in which it may be necessary for us to speak evil of other men. And these are so evidently reasonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reason be extended to them. And if no man would allow himself to say any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in these
and

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and the like Cases, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III. III^d place, to consider *the evil of this Practice*, both in the *Causes* and the *Consequences* of it.

First, We will consider the *Causes* of it. And it commonly springs from one or more of these evil Roots.

First, One of the deepest and most common *Causes* of *evil-speaking* is *ill-nature* and cruelty of disposition: And by a general mistake *Ill-nature* passeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wisdom*; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far distant as *Vice* and *Vertue*.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneness of men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* says) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. And therefore men do commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side: which shews humane Nature to be strangely distorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it self in *Satyr* and *Censure*,

sure, than in Praise and *Panegyrick*. When men set themselves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and straining; and if any thing be fitly said in that kind, it doth hardly relish with most men: But in the way of *Invective*, the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more easie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may come to his own turn to lie down and make sport for others.

To speak evil of others, is almost become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and serious business of most Meetings and Visits, after the necessary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to sit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sauce* of Conversation, and all Discourse is counted but flat and dull which hath not something of *piquancy* and sharpness in it against some body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are secretly pleas'd with ill reports; and drink them in with greediness and delight: Though at the same time

time they have so much Justice, as to hate those that propagate them; and so much Wit, as to conclude that these very persons will do the same for them in another Place and Company.

But especially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Case, all Parties seem to be agreed that they do God great service in blasting the reputation of their Adversaries: And though they all pretend to be *Christians*, and the *Disciples of Him* who taught nothing but *kindness* and *meekness* and *charity*; yet it is strange to see with what a salvage and murderous disposition they will flie at one another's Reputation and tear it in pieces: And what-ever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to bespatter one another in the most bitter and slanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adversaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raise against it? and with what coldness do they at last admit it? *It is very well*, say they, *if it be true: I shall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard so much good of him before. You are*

are a good man your self, but have a care you be not deceived.

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and set things even, they do not clap some infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that so the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other side, every man is a good and substantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one sort of men, though all are to blame in this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra*. To speak impartially, the Zealots of all Parties have got a scurvy trick of lying for the Truth.

But of all sorts of People, I have observed the Priests and Bigots of the Church of Rome to be the ablest in this way, and to have the strongest Faith for a lusty Falshood and Calumny. Others will bandy a false Report, and toss it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would so hug a Lye and be so very fond of it. They seem to be described by St. John in that expression in the Revelation, *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lye*.

Another shrewd sign that ill-nature lies at the root of this Vice is, that we easily forget the good that is said of others,

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thers, and seldom make mention of it; but the contrary sticks with us, and lies uppermost in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occasions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjust, many times when we do not believe it our selves we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true*: But in the mean time we give it our *Pass*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of those into whose hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cause of the commonness of this Vice is, that many are so bad themselves, in one kind or other. For to think and speak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man. Our *Blessed Saviour*, speaking of the evil of the *last days*, gives this as the reason of the great decay of Charity among men; *Because iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold*.
Matth. 24.
12. When men are bad themselves, they are glad of any opportunity to censure others, and are always apt to suspect that evil of other men which they know by themselves. They cannot have a good opinion of themselves, and therefore are very unwilling to have so of any body else;

else; and for this reason they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them if they can but render others as bad as themselves.

Thirdly, Another source of this Vice is *Malice* and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Passion they do not consider what is true, but what is spiteful and mischievous; and speak evil of others in revenge of some injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Passions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they speak be true or not. Nay many are so *Devilish*, as to invent and raise false Reports on purpose to blast men's Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. James tells us that the slanderous Tongue is set on fire of Hell: And the Devil hath his very Name from *Calumny* and false Accusation; and it is his Nature too, for he is always ready to stir up and foment this evil spirit among men: Nay, the Scripture tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuse good men before God; as he did Job, charging him with *Hypocrisie* to God himself; Who, he knows, does

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know

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know the hearts of all the children of men.

Fourthly, Another Cause of evil-speaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obscures *them*, and that their commendable qualities do stand in *their* light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their Vertues may not scorch *them*. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish any thing that may serve to that purpose, thereby to raise themselves upon the Ruins of other men's Reputation: And therefore as soon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they presently go to send it abroad by the first *Post*: For the string is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible swiftness, through *City* and *Country*; for fear the innocent man's justification should over-take it.

Fifthly, Another Cause of evil-speaking is *Impertinence* and *Curiosity*; an itch of talking and meddling in the affairs of other Men, which do no wise concern them. Some persons love to mingle themselves in all business, and are loth to

to seem ignorant of so important a piece of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of discourse in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of something better to talk of, and because their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Lastly, Men do this many times out of *wantonneſs* and for *diverſion*. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderoſ Tongue *bites like a Serpent*, and *wounds like a Sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themſelves; and this only to divert themſelves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons; *As a mad-man*, ſaith he, *who caſteth fire-brands, ar-*

rows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour; the LXX. render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?* Such, and so bad are the Causes of this Vice. I proceed to consider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Consequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

First, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are slandered. To them it is certainly a great *injury*, and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no small *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*; and if the evil which we say of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all possible reparation. And though we should do our utmost endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; because the Vindication seldom reacheth so far as the Reproach, and because commonly men are neither so forward to spread the Vindication, nor is it so easily received after ill impressions are once made. The solicitous Vindication of a man's self is, at the best, but an *after-game*; and for the most part a man had better

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better sit still, than to run the hazard of making the matter worse by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that descends to a man's Children and Posterity ; because the good or ill Name of the Father is derived down to them ; and many times the best thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemish'd Virtue and Worth : And do we make no Conscience to rob his innocent Children of the best part of this small Patrimony, and of all the kindness that would have been done them for their Father's sake, if his Reputation had not been so undeservedly stain'd ? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blast a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Posterity ? Can we make a jest of so serious a matter ? Of an Injury so very hard to be repented of as it ought, because in such a Case no Repentance will be acceptable without Restitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it ; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Case at the best, that the matter of the Slander is true ; yet no man's Reputation is considerably stain-

ed, though never so deservedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by passing through several hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate Quarrels. This reason the wise Son of *Sirach* gives why we should defame no man: *Whether it be*, says he, *to a friend or a foe, talk not of other men's lives. For he hath heard and observed thee*; that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, and when the time cometh he will shew his hatred; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it.

Ecclus. 19.
8, 9.

At the best, it is always matter of Grief to the person that is defam'd: And *Christianity*, which is the *best-natur'd Institution* in the World, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible

ble is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

Secondly, The Consequences of this Vice are as bad or worse to our selves. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our Saviour says in this very Case, *That with what measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again; and that many times heaped up, and running over.* For there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing. Matth. 7.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than Words. A reproachful and slanderous Speech hath cost many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loss of his own Life, or the Murder of another, perhaps with the loss

loss of his own Soul : And I have often wonder'd that among *Christians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of these great mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whose kindness and good-will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil-speaking*. What man is he, saith the *Psalmist*, that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good : Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood.

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourselves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. James expressly tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.* And St. Paul puts Slanderers and Revilers amongst those that shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And our Blessed Saviour hath told us, That by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.

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demned. To which I will add the counsel given us by the *Wise-man*, *Refrain your tongue from back-biting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul.* I proceed in the

Wisdom
of Solo-
mon, c. 1.
v. 11.

IVth. place, to add *some further Arguments and Considerations to take men off from this Vice* : As,

IV.

First, That the use of *Speech* is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon him for some excellent end and purpose : That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult together for our mutual comfort and benefit : Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Psalmist*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *Glory* ; therewith we *praise God* and *bless Men*. Now to *bless* is to speak well of any, and to wish them well. So that we pervert the use of *Speech* and turn our *glory* into shame, when we abuse this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Consider how cheap a kindness it is to speak well, at least not to speak ill of any. A good word is an ease

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the obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our Silence, which costs us nothing. Some instances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and necessities of others: The expence deterrs many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never so covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at least he might refrain from speaking ill of him: especially if it be consider'd how dear many have paid for a slanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, Consider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good-will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one desires such a man's friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praise him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteousness to Men, nothing is thought a more significant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to speak ill of any. It was a singular Character of a Roman Gentleman, *Nescivit quid esset maledicere*, he knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and consider how himself

self is apt to be affected with this usage. Speak thy Conscience *Man*, and say whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldst not be glad to have every man's, especially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd, and not to be hardly spoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by those whom thou didst never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reason dost thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been so contrary? Nothing surely is more equal and reasonable than that known *Rule*, *What thou wouldst have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to speak reproachfully of others, consider whether you do not lie open to just reproach in the same, or some other kind. Therefore give no Occasion, no Example of this barbarous usage of one another.

There are very few so innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wisest, and most virtuous, and most perfect among men have some little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the railery of a mimical and malicious

licious Wit: Therefore we should often turn our thoughts upon our selves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their shoulders and keep behind them, that they may not see their own Faults: And when we have searched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule*, *He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.*

Lastly consider, That it is in many Cases as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great necessity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not bestow a small Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpose; *Talk not of other men's lives: If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burst thee.* I shall in the

Eccius.

19. 10.

V. Vth. and last place, give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

First, Never say any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. When ever you positively accuse and *endite* any man of any *Crime*, though it be in private and among Friends, speak as if you were
upon

upon your *Oath*, because God sees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Justice and regard to Truth do demand of us. He that easily credits an ill Report is almost as faulty as the first inventor of it. For though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lye*. Therefore never speak evil of any upon *common Fame*, which for the most part is false, but almost always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in most Cases, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be so: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abstain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with some Persons, and to gain this point of them however; because it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-speaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you speak evil of any man, consider whether he hath not obliged you by some real kindness, and then it is a bad return to speak ill of him who hath done us good. Consider also, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be ashamed

shamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reason also to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Consider likewise, whether in the change of Humane affairs, you may not some time or other come to stand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a spiteful and needles word by a shrewd turn? So that if a man made no conscience of hurting others, yet he should in prudence have some consideration of himself.

Thirdly, Let us accustom our selves to pity the Faults of men and to be truly sorry for them, and then we shall take no pleasure in publishing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, considering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our selves also are liable to be tempted: Considering likewise, how severe a Punishment every Fault and miscarriage is to it self; and how terribly it exposeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Christian*, that is not heartily sorry for the faults
even

even of his greatest Enemies ; and if he be so, he will discover them no further than is necessary to some good end.

Fourthly, When-ever we hear any man evil-spoken of, if we know any good of him let us say *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to stand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuse and bespatter them. Possibly the good you have heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither : However, it is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the Reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man should be evil-spoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities should be mention'd together ; otherwise he may be strangely misrepresented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monster.

They that will observe nothing in a Wise man, but his over-sights and follies ; nothing in a Good man, but his failings and infirmities ; may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable. If one should heap together all the passionate Speeches, all the

G g froward

froward and imprudent Actions of the best Man; all that he had said, or done amiss in his whole Life, and present it all at one view, concealing his Wisdom and Vertues; the Man in this Disguise would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And yet if his Life were fairly represented, and just in the same manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues set over against his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Person. But how many and great forever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but just that with all this heavy load of Faults he should have the due praise of the few real Virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not speak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *busy-bodies*, and those that love to talk of other men's Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them because of their Quality, then divert the discourse some other way; or if you cannot do that, by seeming not to mind it, you may sufficiently signify that you do not like it.

Sixthly, Let every man mind himself, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do
but

but endeavour in good earnest to mend thy self, and it will be ~~work~~ enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionysius*, who would fain have had a famous *Philosopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in some unkindness, and *Dionysius* bade him not to speak ill of him when he was return'd into *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leisure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of so bad a man, so notoriously known to all the World.

Lastly, Let us set a watch before the door of our lips, and not speak but upon consideration: I do not mean to speak *finely*, but *fitly*. Especially when thou speakest of others, consider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to speak: Use great Caution and Circumspection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every side of the thing, and on every person in the Company, before thy words slip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men should be sullen in company, and say nothing; or so stiff in

conversation, as to drop nothing but *Aphorisms* and *Oracles*: Especially, among Equals and Friends, we should not be so reserved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchsafe to say any thing. If a Man had the understanding of an *Angel*, he must be contented to abate something of this excess of *Wisdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Conversation, if any body can hit upon it, seems to be this; an appearing freedom and openness, with a resolute reservedness as little appearing as is possible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we should consider well what we say, especially of others. And to this end we should endeavour to get our minds furnished with matter of Discourse concerning things useful in themselves, and not hurtful to others: And, if we have but a Mind wise enough, and good enough, we may easily find a Field large enough for innocent Conversation; such as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiser part of Mankind: And why should any one be at the cost of playing the fool to gratifie any body whatsoever?

I have

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I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to speak to upon this Argument. But because hardly any thing can be so clear, but something may be said against it; nor any thing so bad, but something may be pleaded in excuse for it: I shall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

First, Some pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the same kind, it seems thou art sensible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughtest to abstain from it: But in what kind soever it be, the Christian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuse of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practised, Conversation would be spoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleasant discourse and entertainment.

I answer, The design of this Discourse is to redress a great evil in Conversation, and that I hope which mends it will not spoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more still, and most of us

Pfal. 34.
12, 13.

spake a good deal less than we do, both of our selves and others, I see no great harm in it : I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and see many good days. *David*, I am sure, prescribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-speaking ; *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good ? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood.*

But granting that there is some pleasure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence* : And the more any man considers this, the truer he will find it ; and when-ever we are serious, we our selves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himself impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind and wish he had not done them. For this certainly is one necessary qualification for the *Blessed Sacrament*, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours* ; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconsistent.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, There is yet a more specious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can escape the tongues of men ; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place : Because by this means one great restraint from doing evil would be taken away, which these good men who are so bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the displeasure of God, will yet abstain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men : Besides, that this seems the most proper punishment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not seem so good and laudable a way to punish one Fault by another: But let no man encourage himself in an evil way with this hope, that he shall escape the censure of men : When I have said all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-speaking enough in the World to chastise them that do ill : And though we should hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wish we could but be persuaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be suffi-

ciently lash'd for their Faults, though we
sate by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that
good Men should be concern'd in this
odious Work. There will always be Of-
fenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the
Executioners to inflict this punishment
upon one another. Therefore let no man
presume upon Impunity on the one hand ;
and on the other, let no man despair but
that this business will be sufficiently done
one way or other. I am very much mi-
staken, if we may not safely trust an ill-
natur'd World that there will be no fai-
lure of Justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would fain have
said a word or two concerning that more
publick sort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and
Libels, so much in fashion in this witty
Age. But I have no mind to provoke a
very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much
I hope may be said without offence, that
how much soever men are pleas'd to see
others abused in this kind, yet it is al-
ways grievous when it comes to their
own turn: However I cannot but hope
that every man that impartially consi-
ders must own it to be a fault of a very
high nature to revile those whom God
hath placed in Authority over us, and

to slander the footsteps of the Lord's Anointed: Especially since it is so expressly written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Rulers of thy People.

Having represented the great evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future; and so turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the Pattern of our *Blessed Saviour, Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

We may consider likewise, that though it be a misfortune to be evil-spoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore should not put us into Passion, because another man's being injurious to me is no good reason why I should be uneasie to my self. We should
not

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not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much less upon our selves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to lose thy Patience. Be not such a fool, as to part with any one Virtue because some men are so malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the rest. When men speak ill of thee, do as *Plato* said he would do in that case; *Live so, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been said, and to urge you and my self to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practise what we so plainly see to be our Duty. Many are so taken up with the deep *Points* and *Mysteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of humane Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are so far from clashing with one another, that the *Christian Religion* hath made them inseparable. True *Faith* is necessary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the one never ought to be press'd to the prejudice of the other.

I fore-

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I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case; that there is *not one word of Jesus Christ in all this*. No more is there in the *Text*. And yet I hope that *Jesus Christ* is truly preach'd, when-ever his *Will and Laws*, and the *Duties* injoyn'd by the *Christian Religion* are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleased to say, that *this is mere Morality*: I answer, that this is *Scripture-Morality* and *Christian-Morality*, and who hath any thing to say against *that*? Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Christian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of so plain a *Duty*; and in the practice of a *Sin* so clearly condemn'd by it, as this of *evil-speaking* is.

But because *the Word of God* is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged Sword, yea sharper than *Calumny* it self; and pierceth the very Hearts and Consciences of men, laying us open to our selves, and convincing us of our more secret as well as our more visible Faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said
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concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God*.

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any Humane Discourse. And to this end be pleas'd to consider in what company the *Holy Ghost* doth usually mention this *Sin*. There is scarce any *black Catalogue of Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst *Actions* and most irregular *Passions* of men. Out of the heart, says our Saviour, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, false-witness, evil-speaking. And the *Apostle* ranks backbiters with fornicators, and murderers, and haters of God; and with those of whom it is expressly said that *they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*.

Matth.

15. 19.

Rom. 1.

29.

1 Cor. 6.

10.

2 Tim. 3.

2, 3.

And when he enumerates the *Sins of the last times*, Men, says he, shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, evil-speakers, without natural affection, perfidious, false accusers, &c. And which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apostle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for so
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it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of *Christianity*, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion*: As if any pretence to *Mystery* and I know not what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of *Christ*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and set them above the Vertues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* so frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the *blackest Crimes*; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly shut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God*? and can we allow our selves in the common practice of a *Sin*, than which there is hardly any Fault of men's Lives more frequently mention'd, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously branded in that *Holy Book*?

Consider

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Psal. 15. 1. Consider seriously these *Texts*. *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. Have ye never heard what our Saviour says, that of every idle word we must give an account in the day of Judgment; that by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd? What can be more severe than that of St. James? If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The *Sin*, which I have now warned men against, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*; and the *Duty* which I have now been persuading you to, is easie for every man to understand, not hard for any man, that can but resolve to keep a good guard upon himself for some time, by the grace of God to practice; and most reasonable for all *Men*, but especially for all *Christians*, to observe. It is as easie as a *resolute silence* upon just occasion, as reasonable as *prudence* and *justice* and *charity*, and the preservation of *peace* and *good-will* among men, can make it; and
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of as necessary and indispensable an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Considerations let us every one of us be persuaded to take up *David's* deliberate Resolution, *I said, I* Psal. 31.1. *will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we should soon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice*, together with those that are nearly allied to it, and may at the same time, and almost with the same resolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many considerable Vertues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conscience of his *Words* should not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions*. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reason of that saying of *St. James*, and with which I shall conclude: *If any man offend not in Word, the same is a perfect man.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,

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Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; To whom be glory for ever, Amen.

FINIS.

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